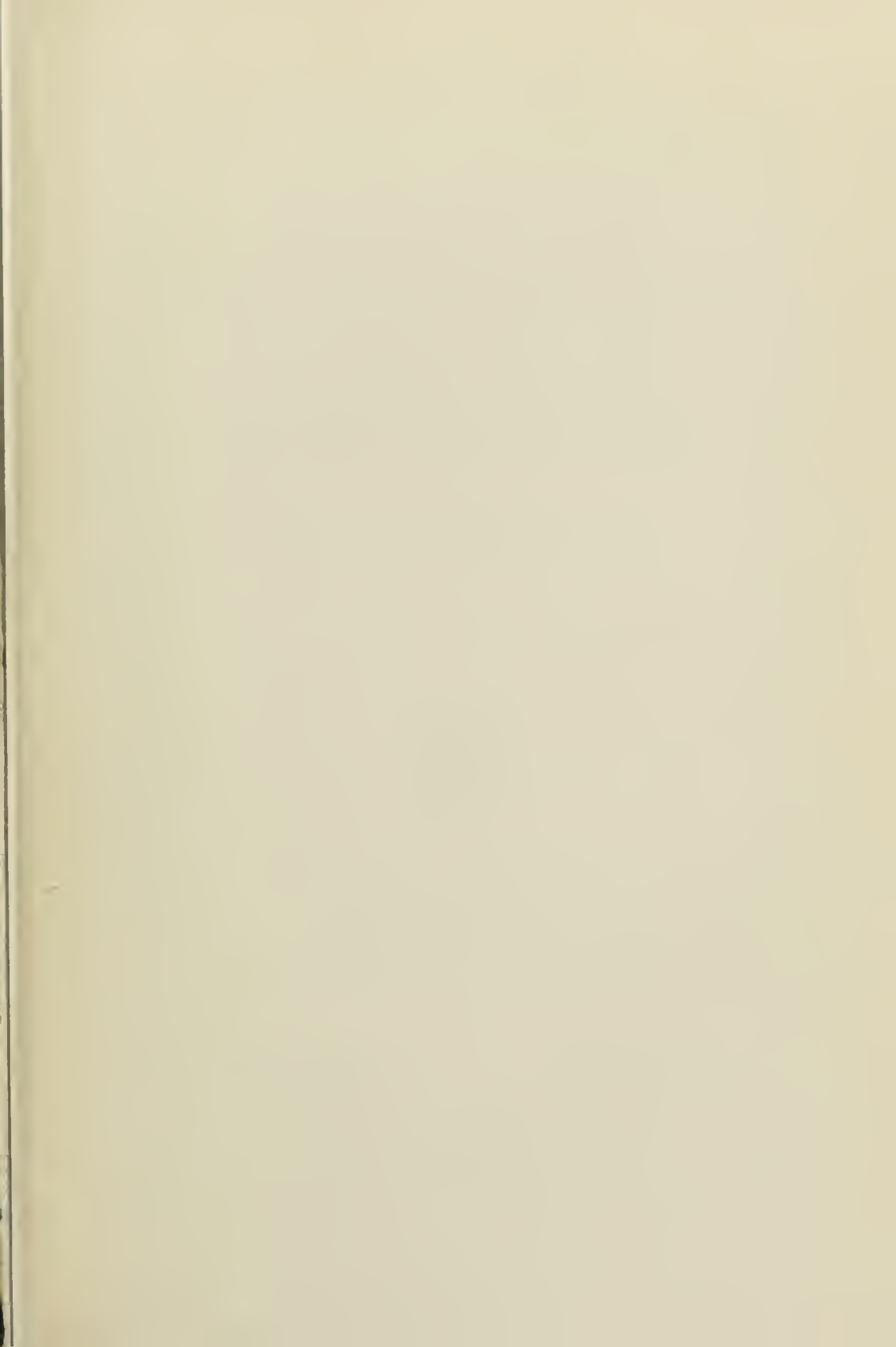








THE MANDALAY EDITION
OF THE WORKS OF
RUDYARD KIPLING

THE DAY'S WORK

MANY INVENTIONS

BY
RUDYARD KIPLING



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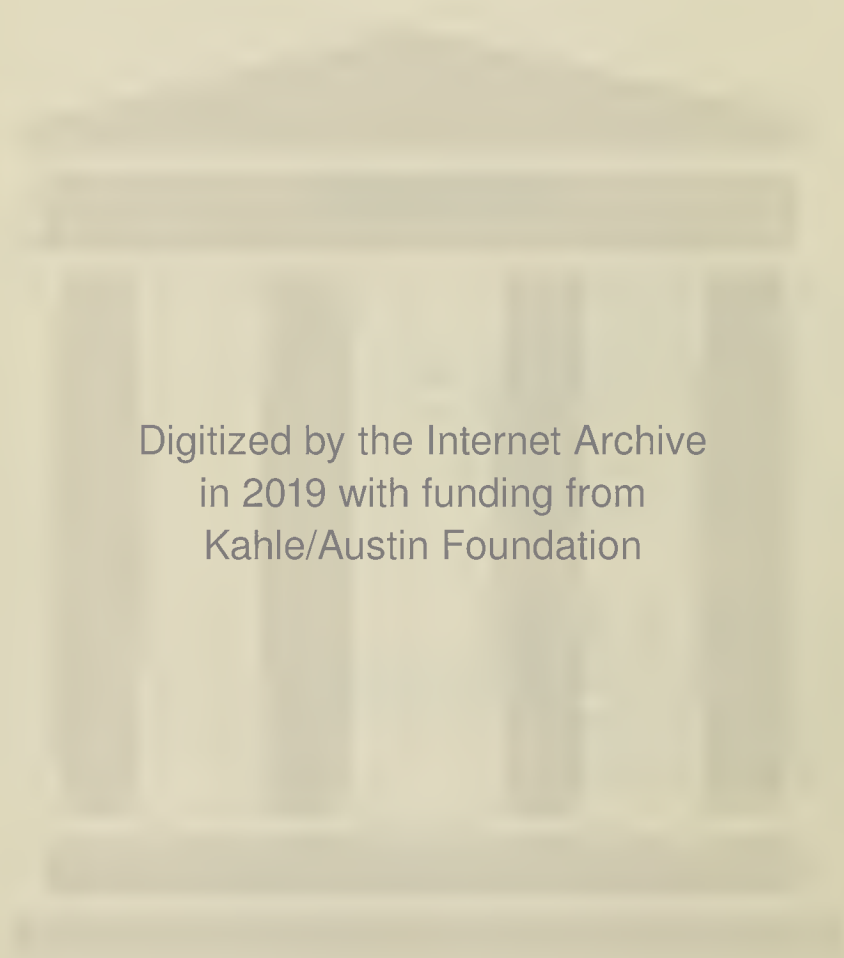
MANY INVENTIONS

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THE DAY'S WORK

THE BRIDGE-BUILDERS

(1893)

THE least that Findlayson, of the Public Works Department, expected was a C. I. E.; he dreamed of a C. S. I.: indeed his friends told him that he deserved more. For three years he had endured heat and cold, disappointment, discomfort, danger, and disease, with responsibility almost too heavy for one pair of shoulders; and day by day, through that time, the great Kashi Bridge over the Ganges had grown under his charge. Now, in less than three months, if all went well, His Excellency the Viceroy would open the bridge in state, an archbishop would bless it, the first train-load of soldiers would come over it, and there would be speeches.

Findlayson, C. E., sat in his trolley on a construction-line that ran along one of the main revetments—the huge stone-faced banks that flared away north and south for three miles on either side of the river—and permitted himself to think of the end. With its approaches, his work was one mile and three-quarters in length; a lattice-girder bridge, trussed with the Findlayson truss, standing on seven-and-twenty brick piers. Each one of those piers was twenty-four feet in diameter, capped with red Agra stone and sunk eighty feet below the shifting sand of the Ganges' bed. Above them ran the

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railway-line fifteen feet broad; above that, again, a cart-road of eighteen feet, flanked with footpaths. At either end rose towers of red brick, loopholed for musketry and pierced for big guns, and the ramp of the road was being pushed forward to their haunches. The raw earth-ends were crawling and alive with hundreds upon hundreds of tiny asses climbing out of the yawning borrow-pit below with sackfuls of stuff; and the hot afternoon air was filled with the noise of hooves, the rattle of the drivers' sticks, and the swish and roll-down of the dirt. The river was very low, and on the dazzling white sand between the three centre piers stood squat cribs of railway-sleepers, filled within and daubed without with mud, to support the last of the girders as those were riveted up. In the little deep water left by the drought, an overhead-crane travelled to and fro along its spile-pier, jerking sections of iron into place, snorting and backing and grunting as an elephant grunts in the timber-yard. Riveters by the hundred swarmed about the lattice side-work and the iron roof of the railway-line, hung from invisible staging under the bellies of the girders, clustered round the throats of the piers, and rode on the overhang of the footpath-stanchions; their fire-pots and the spurts of flame that answered each hammer-stroke showing no more than pale yellow in the sun's glare. East and west and north and south the construction-trains rattled and shrieked up and down the embankments, the piled trucks of brown and white stone banging behind them till the sideboards were unpinned, and with a roar and a grumble a few thousand tons more material were thrown out to hold the river in place.

Findlayson, C. E., turned on his trolley and looked

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over the face of the country that he had changed for seven miles around. Looked back on the humming village of five thousand workmen; up-stream and down, along the vista of spurs and sand; across the river to the far piers, lessening in the haze; overhead to the guard-towers—and only he knew how strong those were—and with a sigh of contentment saw that his work was good. There stood his bridge before him in the sunlight, lacking only a few weeks' work on the girders of the three middle piers—his bridge, raw and ugly as original sin, but pukka—permanent—to endure when all memory of the builder, yea, even of the splendid Findlayson truss, had perished. Practically, the thing was done.

Hitchcock, his assistant, cantered along the line on a little switch-tailed Kabuli pony, who, through long practice, could have trotted securely over a trestle, and nodded to his chief.

'All but,' said he, with a smile.

'I've been thinking about it,' the senior answered. 'Not half a bad job for two men, is it?'

'One—and a half. 'Gad, what a Cooper's Hill cub I was when I came on the works!' Hitchcock felt very old in the crowded experiences of the past three years, that had taught him power and responsibility.

'You were rather a colt,' said Findlayson. 'I wonder how you'll like going back to office work when this job's over.'

'I shall hate it!' said the young man, and as he went on his eye followed Findlayson's, and he muttered, 'Isn't it damned good?'

'I think we'll go up the service together,' Findlayson said to himself. 'You're too good a youngster to waste on another man. Cub thou wast; assistant thou art.'

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Personal assistant, and at Simla, thou shalt be, if any credit comes to me out of the business!'

Indeed, the burden of the work had fallen altogether on Findlayson and his assistant, the young man whom he had chosen because of his rawness to break to his own needs. There were labour-contractors by the half-hundred—fitters and riveters, European, borrowed from railway work-shops, with perhaps twenty white and half-caste subordinates to direct, under direction, the bevvies of workmen—but none knew better than these two, who trusted each other, how the underlings were not to be trusted. They had been tried many times in sudden crises—by slipping of booms, by breaking of tackle, failure of cranes, and the wrath of the river—but no stress had brought to light any man among them whom Findlayson and Hitchcock would have honoured by working as remorselessly as they worked themselves. Findlayson thought it over from the beginning: the months of office work destroyed at a blow when the Government of India, at the last moment, added two feet to the width of the bridge, under the impression that bridges were cut out of paper, and so brought to ruin at least half an acre of calculations—and Hitchcock, new to disappointment, buried his head in his arms and wept; the heart-breaking delays over the filling of the contracts in England; the futile correspondences hinting at great wealth of commission if one, only one, rather doubtful consignment were passed; the war that followed the refusal; the careful, polite obstruction at the other end that followed the war, till young Hitchcock, putting one month's leave to another month, and borrowing ten days from Findlayson, spent his poor little savings of a year in a wild dash to London, and there, as his own

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tongue asserted and the later consignments proved, put the Fear of God into a man so great that he feared only Parliament, and said so till Hitchcock wrought with him across his own dinner-table, and—he feared the Kashi Bridge and all who spoke in its name. Then there was the cholera that came in the night to the village by the bridge-works; and after the cholera smote the smallpox. The fever they had always with them. Hitchcock had been appointed a magistrate of the third class with whipping powers, for the better government of the community, and Findlayson watched him wield his powers temperately, learning what to overlook and what to look after. It was a long, long reverie, and it covered storm, sudden freshets, death in every manner and shape, violent and awful rage against red tape half frenzying a mind that knows it should be busy on other things; drought, sanitation, finance; birth, wedding, burial, and riot in the village of twenty warring castes; argument, expostulation, persuasion, and the blank despair that a man goes to bed upon, thankful that his rifle is all in pieces in the gun-case. Behind everything rose the black frame of the Kashi Bridge—plate by plate, girder by girder, span by span—and each pier of it recalled Hitchcock, the all-round man, who had stood by his chief without failing from the very first to this last.

So the bridge was two men's work—unless one counted Peroo, as Peroo certainly counted himself. He was a Lascar, a Kharva from Bulsar, familiar with every port between Rockhampton and London, who had risen to the rank of serang on the British India boats, but wearying of routine musters and clean clothes had thrown up the service and gone inland, where men of his calibre were sure of employment. For his knowledge of tackle

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and the handling of heavy weights, Peroo was worth almost any price he might have chosen to put upon his services; but custom decreed the wage of the overhead-men, and Peroo was not within many silver pieces of his proper value. Neither running water nor extreme heights made him afraid; and, as an ex-serang, he knew how to hold authority. No piece of iron was so big or so badly placed that Peroo could not devise a tackle to lift it—a loose-ended, sagging arrangement, rigged with a scandalous amount of talking, but perfectly equal to the work in hand. It was Peroo who had saved the girder of Number Seven Pier from destruction when the new wire rope jammed in the eye of the crane, and the huge plate tilted in its slings, threatening to slide out sideways. Then the native workmen lost their heads with great shoutings, and Hitchcock's right arm was broken by a falling T-plate, and he buttoned it up in his coat and swooned, and came to and directed for four hours till Peroo, from the top of the crane, reported, 'All's well,' and the plate swung home. There was no one like Peroo, serang, to lash and guy and hold, to control the donkey-engines, to hoist a fallen locomotive craftily out of the borrow-pit into which it had tumbled; to strip and dive, if need be, to see how the concrete blocks round the piers stood the scouring of Mother Gunga, or to adventure up-stream on a monsoon night and report on the state of the embankment-facings. He would interrupt the field-councils of Findlayson and Hitchcock without fear, till his wonderful English, or his still more wonderful lingua-franca, half Portuguese and half Malay, ran out and he was forced to take string and show the knots that he would recommend. He controlled his own gang of tacklemen—mysterious rel-

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atives from Kutch Mandvi gathered month by month and tried to the uttermost. No consideration of family or kin allowed Peroo to keep weak hands or a giddy head on the pay-roll. 'My honour is the honour of this Bridge,' he would say to the about-to-be dismissed. 'What do I care for your honour? Go and work on a steamer. That is all you are fit for.'

The little cluster of huts where he and his gang lived centred round the tattered dwelling of a sea-priest—one who had never set foot on Black Water, but had been chosen as ghostly counsellor by two generations of sea-rovers, all unaffected by port missions or those creeds which are thrust upon sailors by agencies along Thames' bank. The priest of the Lascars had nothing to do with their caste, or indeed with anything at all. He ate the offerings of his church, and slept and smoked, and slept again, 'for,' said Peroo, who had haled him a thousand miles inland, 'he is a very holy man. He never cares what you eat so long as you do not eat beef, and that is good, because on land we worship Shiva, we Kharvas; but at sea on the Kumpani's boats we attend strictly to the orders of the Burra Malum (the first mate), and on this bridge we observe what Finlinson Sahib says.'

Findlayson Sahib had that day given orders to clear the scaffolding from the guard-tower on the right bank, and Peroo with his mates was casting loose and lowering down the bamboo poles and planks as swiftly as ever they had whipped the cargo out of a coaster.

From his trolley he could hear the whistle of the serang's silver pipe and the creak and clatter of the pulleys. Peroo was standing on the topmost coping of the tower, clad in the blue dungaree of his abandoned service, and as Findlayson motioned to him to be care-

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ful, for his was no life to throw away, he gripped the last pole, and, shading his eyes ship-fashion, answered with the long-drawn wail of the fo'c'sle look-out: 'Ham dekhta hai' ('I am looking out'). Findlayson laughed, and then sighed. It was years since he had seen a steamer, and he was sick for home. As his trolley passed under the tower, Peroo descended by a rope, ape-fashion, and cried: 'It looks well now, Sahib. Our bridge is all but done. What think you Mother Gunga will say when the rail runs over?'

'She has said little so far. It never was Mother Gunga that delayed us.'

'There is always time for her; and none the less there has been delay. Has the Sahib forgotten last autumn's flood, when the stone-boats were sunk without warning—or only a half-day's warning?'

'Yes, but nothing save a big flood could hurt us now. The spurs are holding well on the west bank.'

'Mother Gunga eats great allowances. There is always room for more stone on the revetments. I tell this to the Chota Sahib—he meant Hitchcock—and he laughs.'

'No matter, Peroo. Another year thou wilt be able to build a bridge in thine own fashion.'

The Lascâr grinned. 'Then it will not be in this way—with stonework sunk under water, as the "Quetta" was sunk. I like sus-sus-pen-sheen bridges that fly from bank to bank, with one big step, like a gang-plank. Then no water can hurt. When does the Lord Sahib come to open the bridge?'

'In three months, when the weather is cooler.'

'Ho! ho! He is like the Burra Malum. He sleeps below while the work is being done. Then he comes

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upon the quarter-deck and touches with his finger, and says: "This is not clean! Dam jiboonwallah!"

'But the Lord Sahib does not call me a dam jiboonwallah, Peroo.'

'No, Sahib; but he does not come on deck till the work is all finished. Even the Burra Malum of the "Nerbudda" said once at Tuticorin—'

'Bah! Go! I am busy.'

'I, also!' said Peroo, with an unshaken countenance. 'May I take the light dinghy now and row along the spurs?'

'To hold them with thy hands? They are, I think, sufficiently heavy.'

'Nay, Sahib. It is thus. At sea, on the Black Water, we have room to be blown up and down without care. Here we have no room at all. Look you, we have put the river into a dock, and run her between stone sills.'

Findlayson smiled at the 'we.'

'We have bitted and bridled her. She is not like the sea, that can beat against a soft beach. She is Mother Gunga—in irons.' His voice fell a little.

'Peroo, thou hast been up and down the world more even than I. Speak true talk, now. How much dost thou in thy heart believe of Mother Gunga?'

'All that our priest says. London is London, Sahib. Sydney is Sydney, and Port Darwin is Port Darwin. Also Mother Gunga is Mother Gunga, and when I come back to her banks I know this and worship. In London I did poojah to the big temple by the river for the sake of the God within. . . . Yes, I will not take the cushions in the dinghy.'

Findlayson mounted his horse and trotted to the shed of a bungalow that he shared with his assistant. The

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place had become home to him in the last three years. He had grilled in the heat, sweated in the rains, and shivered with fever under the rude thatch roof; the limewash beside the door was covered with rough drawings and formulæ, and the sentry-path trodden in the matting of the veranda showed where he had walked alone. There is no eight-hour limit to an engineer's work, and the evening meal with Hitchcock was eaten booted and spurred. Over their cigars they listened to the hum of the village as the gangs came up from the river-bed and the lights began to twinkle.

'Peroo has gone up the spurs in your dinghy. He's taken a couple of nephews with him, and he's lolling in the stern like a commodore,' said Hitchcock.

'That's all right. He's got something on his mind. You'd think that ten years in the British India boats would have knocked most of his religion out of him.'

'So it has,' said Hitchcock, chuckling. 'I overheard him the other day in the middle of a most atheistical talk with that fat old guru of theirs. Peroo denied the efficacy of prayer; and wanted the guru to go to sea and watch a gale out with him, and see if he could stop a monsoon.'

'All the same, if you carried off his guru he'd leave us like a shot. He was yarning away to me about praying to the dome of St. Paul's when he was in London.'

'He told me that the first time he went into the engine-room of a steamer, when he was a boy, he prayed to the low-pressure cylinder.'

'Not half a bad thing to pray to, either. He's propitiating his own Gods now, and he wants to know what Mother Gunga will think of a bridge being run across her. Who's there?' A shadow darkened the doorway, and a telegram was put into Hitchcock's hand.

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'She ought to be pretty well used to it by this time. Only a tar. It ought to be Ralli's answer about the new rivets. . . . Great Heavens!' Hitchcock jumped to his feet.

'What is it?' said the senior, and took the form. 'That's what Mother Gunga thinks, is it,' he said, reading. 'Keep cool, young 'un. We've got all our work cut for us. Let's see. Muir wires, half an hour ago: "Floods on the Ramgunga. Look out." Well, that gives us—one, two—nine and a half for the flood to reach Melipur Ghaut and seven's sixteen and a half to Latodi—say fifteen hours before it comes down to us.'

'Curse that hill-fed sewer of a Ramgunga! Findlayson, this is two months before anything could have been expected, and the left bank is littered up with stuff still. Two full months before the time!'

'That's why it happens. I've only known Indian rivers for five and twenty years, and I don't pretend to understand. Here comes another tar.' Findlayson opened the telegram. 'Cockran, this time, from the Ganges Canal: "Heavy rains here. Bad." He might have saved the last word. Well, we don't want to know any more. We've got to work the gangs all night and clean up the river-bed. You'll take the east bank and work out to meet me in the middle. Get everything that floats below the bridge: we shall have quite enough river-craft coming down adrift anyhow, without letting the stone-boats ram the piers. What have you got on the east bank that needs looking after?'

'Pontoon, one big pontoon with the overhead crane on it. T'other overhead crane on the mended pontoon, with the cart-road rivets from Twenty to Twenty-three piers—two construction lines, and a turning-spur. The pile-work must take its chance,' said Hitchcock.

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'All right. Roll up everything you can lay hands on. We'll give the gang fifteen minutes more to eat their grub.'

Close to the veranda stood a big night-gong, never used except for flood, or fire in the village. Hitchcock had called for a fresh horse, and was off to his side of the bridge when Findlayson took the cloth-bound stick and smote with the rubbing stroke that brings out the full thunder of the metal.

Long before the last rumble ceased every night-gong in the village had taken up the warning. To these were added the hoarse screaming of conchs in the little temples; the throbbing of drums and tomtoms; and from the European quarters, where the riveters lived, M'Cartney's bugle, a weapon of offence on Sundays and festivals, brayed desperately, calling to 'Stables.' Engine after engine toiling home along the spurs after her day's work whistled in answer till the whistles were answered from the far bank. Then the big gong thundered thrice for a sign that it was flood and not fire; conch, drum, and whistle echoed the call, and the village quivered to the sound of bare feet running upon soft earth. The order in all cases was to stand by the day's work and wait instructions. The gangs poured by in the dusk; men stopping to knot a loin-cloth or fasten a sandal; gang-foremen shouting to their subordinates as they ran or paused by the tool-issue sheds for bars and mat-tocks; locomotives creeping down their tracks wheel-deep in the crowd, till the brown torrent disappeared into the dusk of the river-bed, raced over the pile-work, swarmed along the lattices, clustered by the cranes, and stood still, each man in his place.

Then the troubled beating of the gong carried the

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order to take up everything and bear it beyond high-water mark, and the flare-lamps broke out by the hundred between the webs of dull-iron as the riveters began a night's work racing against the flood that was to come. The girders of the three centre piers—those that stood on the cribs—were all but in position. They needed just as many rivets as could be driven into them, for the flood would assuredly wash out the supports, and the iron-work would settle down on the caps of stone if they were not blocked at the ends. A hundred cross-bars strained at the sleepers of the temporary line that fed the unfinished piers. It was heaved up in lengths, loaded into trucks, and backed up the bank beyond flood-level by the groaning locomotives. The tool-sheds on the sands melted away before the attack of shouting armies, and with them went the stacked ranks of Government stores, iron-bound boxes of rivets, pliers, cutters, duplicate parts of the riveting-machines, spare pumps and chains. The big crane would be the last to be shifted, for she was hoisting all the heavy stuff up to the main structure of the bridge. The concrete blocks on the fleet of stone-boats were dropped overside, where there was any depth of water, to guard the piers, and the empty boats themselves were poled under the bridge down-stream. It was here that Peroo's pipe shrilled loudest, for the first stroke of the big gong had brought back the dinghy at racing speed, and Peroo and his people were stripped to the waist, working for the honour and credit which are better than life.

'I knew she would speak,' he cried. 'I knew, but the telegraph gave us good warning. O sons of unthinkable begetting—children of unspeakable shame—are we here for the look of the thing?' It was two feet of wire rope

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frayed at the ends, and it did wonders as Peroo leaped from gunnel to gunnel, shouting the language of the sea.

Findlayson was more troubled for the stone-boats than anything else. M'Cartney, with his gangs, was blocking up the ends of the three doubtful spans, but boats adrift, if the flood chanced to be a high one, might endanger the girders; and there was a very fleet in the shrunken channels.

'Get them behind the swell of the guard-tower,' he shouted to Peroo. 'It will be dead-water there; get them below the bridge.'

'Accha! [Very good.] I know. We are mooring them with wire rope,' was the answer. 'Heh! Listen to the Chota Sahib. He is working hard.'

From across the river came an almost continuous whistling of locomotives, backed by the rumble of stone. Hitchcock at the last minute was spending a few hundred more trucks of Tarakee stone in reinforcing his spurs and embankments.

'The bridge challenges Mother Gunga,' said Peroo, with a laugh. 'But when she talks I know whose voice will be the loudest.'

For hours the naked men worked, screaming and shouting under the lights. It was a hot, moonless night; the end of it was darkened by clouds and a sudden squall that made Findlayson very grave.

'She moves!' said Peroo, just before the dawn. 'Mother Gunga is awake! Hear!' He dipped his hand over the side of a boat and the current mumbled on it. A little wave hit the side of a pier with a crisp slap.

'Six hours before her time,' said Findlayson, mopping his forehead savagely. 'Now we can't depend on anything. We'd better clear all hands out of the river-bed.'

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Again the big gong beat, and a second time there was the rushing of naked feet on earth and ringing iron; the clatter of tools ceased. In the silence, men heard the dry yawn of water crawling over thirsty sand.

Foreman after foreman shouted to Findlayson, who had posted himself by the guard-tower, that his section of the river-bed had been cleaned out, and when the last voice dropped Findlayson hurried over the bridge till the iron plating of the permanent way gave place to the temporary plank-walk over the three centre piers, and there he met Hitchcock.

‘All clear your side?’ said Findlayson. The whisper rang in the box of latticework.

‘Yes, and the east channel’s filling now. We’re utterly out of our reckoning. When is this thing down on us?’

‘There’s no saying. She’s filling as fast as she can. Look!’ Findlayson pointed to the planks below his feet, where the burned sand, defiled by months of work, was beginning to whisper and fizz.

‘What orders?’ said Hitchcock.

‘Call the roll—count stores—sit on your hunkers—and pray for the bridge. That’s all I can think of. Good-night. Don’t risk your life trying to fish out anything that may go down-stream.’

‘Oh, I’ll be as prudent as you are! ’Night. Heavens, how she’s filling! Here’s the rain in earnest!’ Findlayson picked his way back to his bank, sweeping the last of M’Cartney’s riveters before him. The gangs had spread themselves along the embankments, regardless of the cold rain of the dawn, and there they waited for the flood. Only Peroo kept his men together behind the swell of the guard-tower, where the stone-boats lay tied fore and aft with hawsers, wire-rope, and chains.

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A shrill wail ran along the line, growing to a yell, half fear and half wonder: the face of the river whitened from bank to bank between the stone facings, and the far-away spurs went out in spouts of foam. Mother Gunga had come bank-high in haste, and a wall of chocolate-coloured water was her messenger. There was a shriek above the roar of the water, the complaint of the spans coming down on their blocks as the cribs were whirled out from under their bellies. The stone-boats groaned and ground each other in the eddy that swung round the abutment, and their clumsy masts rose higher and higher against the dim sky-line.

‘Before she was shut between these walls we knew what she would do. Now she is thus cramped God only knows what she will do!’ said Peroo, watching the furious turmoil round the guard-tower. ‘Ohe! Fight, then! Fight hard, for it is thus that a woman wears herself out.’

But Mother Gunga would not fight as Peroo desired. After the first down-stream plunge there came no more walls of water, but the river lifted herself bodily, as a snake when she drinks in midsummer, plucking and fingering along the revetments, and banking up behind the piers till even Findlayson began to recalculate the strength of his work.

When day came the village gasped. ‘Only last night,’ men said, turning to each other, ‘it was as a town in the river-bed! Look now!’

And they looked and wondered afresh at the deep water, the racing water that licked the throat of the piers. The farther bank was veiled by rain, into which the bridge ran out and vanished; the spurs up-stream were marked by no more than eddies and spoutings, and

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down-stream the pent river, once free of her guide-lines, had spread like a sea to the horizon. Then hurried by, rolling in the water, dead men and oxen together, with here and there a patch of thatched roof that melted when it touched a pier.

‘Big flood,’ said Peroo, and Findlayson nodded. It was as big a flood as he had any wish to watch. His bridge would stand what was upon her now, but not very much more; and if by any of a thousand chances there happened to be a weakness in the embankments, Mother Gunga would carry his honour to the sea with the other raffle. Worst of all, there was nothing to do except to sit still; and Findlayson sat still under his macintosh till his helmet became pulp on his head, and his boots were over-ankle in mire. He took no count of time, for the river was marking the hours, inch by inch and foot by foot, along the embankment, and he listened, numb and hungry, to the straining of the stone-boats, the hollow thunder under the piers, and the hundred noises that make the full note of a flood. Once a dripping servant brought him food, but he could not eat; and once he thought that he heard a faint toot from a locomotive across the river, and then he smiled. The bridge’s failure would hurt his assistant not a little, but Hitchcock was a young man with his big work yet to do. For himself the crash meant everything—everything that made a hard life worth the living. They would say, the men of his own profession—he remembered the half-pitying things that he himself had said when Lockhart’s big water-works burst and broke down in brick heaps and sludge, and Lockhart’s spirit broke in him and he died. He remembered what he himself had said when the Sumao Bridge went out in the big cyclone

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by the sea; and most he remembered poor Hartopp's face three weeks later, when the shame had marked it. His bridge was twice the size of Hartopp's, and it carried the Findlayson truss as well as the new pier-shoe—the Findlayson bolted shoe. There were no excuses in his service. Government might listen, perhaps, but his own kind would judge him by his bridge, as that stood or fell. He went over it in his head, plate by plate, span by span, brick by brick, pier by pier, remembering, comparing, estimating, and recalculating, lest there should be any mistake; and through the long hours and through the flights of formulæ that danced and wheeled before him a cold fear would come to pinch his heart. His side of the sum was beyond question; but what man knew Mother Gunga's arithmetic? Even as he was making all sure by the multiplication-table, the river might be scooping pot-holes to the very bottom of any one of those eighty-foot piers that carried his reputation. Again a servant came to him with food, but his mouth was dry, and he could only drink and return to the decimals in his brain. And the river was still rising. Peroo, in a mat shelter-coat, crouched at his feet, watching now his face and now the face of the river, but saying nothing.

At last the Lascar rose and floundered through the mud towards the village, but he was careful to leave an ally to watch the boats.

Presently he returned, most irreverently driving before him the priest of his creed—a fat old man, with a gray beard that whipped the wind with the wet cloth that blew over his shoulder. Never was seen so lamentable a guru.

‘What good are offerings and little kerosene lamps and dry grain,’ shouted Peroo, ‘if squatting in the mud

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is all that thou canst do? Thou hast dealt long with the Gods when they were contented and well-wishing. Now they are angry. Speak to them!’

‘What is a man against the wrath of Gods?’ whined the priest, cowering as the wind took him. ‘Let me go to the temple, and I will pray there.’

‘Son of a pig, pray here! Is there no return for salt fish and curry powder and dried onions? Call aloud! Tell Mother Gunga we have had enough. Bid her be still for the night. I cannot pray, but I have served in the Kumpani’s boats, and when men did not obey my orders I—’ A flourish of the wire-rope colt rounded the sentence, and the priest, breaking from his disciple, fled to the village.

‘Fat pig!’ said Peroo. ‘After all that we have done for him! When the flood is down I will see to it that we get a new guru. Finlinson Sahib, it darkens for night now, and since yesterday nothing has been eaten. Be wise, Sahib. No man can endure watching and great thinking on an empty belly. Lie down, Sahib. The river will do what the river will do.’

‘The bridge is mine; I cannot leave it.’

‘Wilt thou hold it up with thy hands, then?’ said Peroo, laughing. ‘I was troubled for my boats and sheers before the flood came. Now we are in the hands of the Gods. The Sahib will not eat and lie down? Take these, then. They are meat and good toddy together, and they kill all weariness, besides the fever that follows the rain. I have eaten nothing else to-day at all.’

He took a small tin tobacco-box from his sodden waist-belt and thrust it into Findlayson’s hand, saying, ‘Nay, do not be afraid. It is no more than opium—clean Malwa opium!’

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Findlayson shook two or three of the dark-brown pellets into his hand, and hardly knowing what he did, swallowed them. The stuff was at least a good guard against fever—the fever that was creeping upon him out of the wet mud—and he had seen what Peroo could do in the stewing mists of autumn on the strength of a dose from the tin box.

Peroo nodded with bright eyes. ‘In a little—in a little the Sahib will find that he thinks well again. I too will—’ He dived into his treasure-box, resettled the rain-coat over his head, and squatted down to watch the boats. It was too dark now to see beyond the first pier, and the night seemed to have given the river new strength. Findlayson stood with his chin on his chest, thinking. There was one point about one of the piers—the Seventh—that he had not fully settled in his mind. The figures would not shape themselves to the eye except one by one and at enormous intervals of time. There was a sound, rich and mellow in his ears, like the deepest note of a double-bass—an entrancing sound upon which he pondered for several hours, as it seemed. Then Peroo was at his elbow, shouting that a wire hawser had snapped and the stone-boats were loose. Findlayson saw the fleet open and swing out fan-wise to a long-drawn shriek of wire straining across gunnels.

‘A tree hit them. They will all go,’ cried Peroo. ‘The main hawser has parted. What does the Sahib do?’

An immensely complex plan had suddenly flashed into Findlayson’s mind. He saw the ropes running from boat to boat in straight lines and angles—each rope a line of white fire. But there was one rope which was the master-rope. He could see that rope. If he could pull it once, it was absolutely and mathematically

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certain that the disordered fleet would reassemble itself in the backwater behind the guard-tower. But why, he wondered, was Peroo clinging so desperately to his waist as he hastened down the bank? It was necessary to put the Lascar aside, gently and slowly, because it was necessary to save the boats, and, further, to demonstrate the extreme ease of the problem that looked so difficult. And then—but it was of no conceivable importance—a wire rope raced through his hand, burning it, the high bank disappeared, and with it all the slowly dispersing factors of the problem. He was sitting in the rainy darkness—sitting in a boat that spun like a top, and Peroo was standing over him.

‘I had forgotten,’ said the Lascar slowly, ‘that to those fasting and unused the opium is worse than any wine. Those who die in Gunga go to the Gods. Still, I have no desire to present myself before such great ones. Can the Sahib swim?’

‘What need? He can fly—fly as swiftly as the wind,’ was the thick answer.

‘He is mad!’ muttered Peroo under his breath. ‘And he threw me aside like a bundle of dung-cakes. Well, he will not know his death. The boat cannot live an hour here even if she strike nothing. It is not good to look at death with a clear eye.’

He refreshed himself again from the tin box, squatted down in the bows of the reeling, pegged, and stitched craft, staring through the mist at the nothing that was there. A warm drowsiness crept over Findlayson, the Chief Engineer, whose duty was with his bridge. The heavy raindrops struck him with a thousand tingling little thrills, and the weight of all time since time was made hung heavy on his eyelids. He thought and per-

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ceived that he was perfectly secure, for the water was so solid that a man could surely step out upon it, and, standing still with his legs apart to keep his balance—this was the most important point—would be borne with great and easy speed to the shore. But yet a better plan came to him. It needed only an exertion of will for the soul to hurl the body ashore as wind drives paper; to waft it kite-fashion to the bank. Thereafter—the boat spun dizzily—suppose the high wind got under the freed body? Would it tower up like a kite and pitch headlong on the far-away sands, or would it duck about beyond control through all eternity? Findlayson gripped the gunnel to anchor himself, for it seemed that he was on the edge of taking the flight before he had settled all his plans. Opium has more effect on the white man than the black. Peroo was only comfortably indifferent to accidents. ‘She cannot live,’ he grunted. ‘Her seams open already. If she were even a dinghy with oars we could have ridden it out; but a box with holes is no good. Finlinson Sahib, she fills.’

‘Accha! I am going away. Come thou also.’

In his mind Findlayson had already escaped from the boat, and was circling high in air to find a rest for the sole of his foot. His body—he was really sorry for its gross helplessness—lay in the stern, the water rushing about its knees.

‘How very ridiculous!’ he said to himself, from his eyrie; ‘that—is Findlayson—chief of the Kashi Bridge. The poor beast is going to be drowned, too. Drowned when it’s close to shore. I’m—I’m on shore already. Why doesn’t it come along?’

To his intense disgust, he found his soul back in his body again, and that body spluttering and choking in

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deep water. The pain of the reunion was atrocious, but it was necessary, also, to fight for the body. He was conscious of grasping wildly at wet sand, and striding prodigiously, as one strides in a dream, to keep foothold in the swirling water, till at last he hauled himself clear of the hold of the river, and dropped, panting, on wet earth.

‘Not this night,’ said Peroo in his ear. ‘The Gods have protected us.’ The Lascar moved his feet cautiously, and they rustled among dried stumps. ‘This is some island of last year’s indigo crop,’ he went on. ‘We shall find no men here; but have great care, Sahib; all the snakes of a hundred miles have been flooded out. Here comes the lightning, on the heels of the wind. Now we shall be able to look; but walk carefully.’

Findlayson was far and far beyond any fear of snakes, or indeed any merely human emotion. He saw, after he had rubbed the water from his eyes, with an immense clearness, and trod, so it seemed to himself, with world-encompassing strides. Somewhere in the night of time he had built a bridge—a bridge that spanned illimitable levels of shining seas; but the Deluge had swept it away, leaving this one island under heaven for Findlayson and his companion, sole survivors of the breed of man.

An incessant lightning, forked and blue, showed all that there was to be seen on the little patch in the flood—a clump of thorn, a clump of swaying, creaking bamboos, and a gray gnarled peepul overshadowing a Hindoo shrine, from whose dome floated a tattered red flag. The holy man whose summer resting-place it was had long since abandoned it, and the weather had broken the red-daubed image of his God. The two men stumbled, heavy-limbed and heavy-eyed, over the ashes of a

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brick-set cooking-place, and dropped down under the shelter of the branches, while the rain and river roared together.

The stumps of the indigo crackled, and there was a smell of cattle, as a huge and dripping Brahminee Bull shouldered his way under the tree. The flashes revealed the trident mark of Shiva on his flank, the insolence of head and hump, the luminous stag-like eyes, the brow crowned with a wreath of sodden marigold blooms, and the silky dewlap that nigh swept the ground. There was a noise behind him of other beasts coming up from the flood-line through the thicket, a sound of heavy feet and deep breathing.

‘Here be more beside ourselves,’ said Findlayson, his head against the tree-pole, looking through half-shut eyes, wholly at ease.

‘Truly,’ said Peroo thickly, ‘and no small ones.’

‘What are they, then? I do not see clearly.’

‘The Gods. Who else? Look!’

‘Ah, true! The Gods surely—the Gods.’ Findlayson smiled as his head fell forward on his chest. Peroo was eminently right. After the Flood, who should be alive in the land except the Gods that made it—the Gods to whom his village prayed nightly—the Gods who were in all men’s mouths and about all men’s ways? He could not raise his head or stir a finger for the trance that held him, and Peroo was smiling vacantly at the lightning.

The Bull paused by the shrine, his head lowered to the damp earth. A green Parrot in the branches preened his wet wings and screamed against the thunder as the circle under the tree filled with the shifting shadows of beasts. There was a Blackbuck at the Bull’s heels—

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such a buck as Findlayson in his far-away life upon earth might have seen in dreams—a buck with a royal head, ebon back, silver belly, and gleaming straight horns. Beside him, her head bowed to the ground, the green eyes burning under the heavy brows, with restless tail switching the dead grass, paced a Tigress, full-bellied and deep-jowled.

The Bull crouched beside the shrine, and there leaped from the darkness a monstrous gray Ape, who seated himself man-wise in the place of the fallen image, and the rain spilled like jewels from the hair of his neck and shoulders.

Other shadows came and went behind the circle, among them a drunken Man flourishing staff and drinking-bottle. Then a hoarse bellow broke out from near the ground. 'The flood lessens even now,' it cried. 'Hour by hour the water falls, and their bridge still stands!'

'My bridge,' said Findlayson to himself. 'That must be very old work now. What have the Gods to do with my bridge?'

His eyes rolled in the darkness following the roar. A Crocodile—the blunt-nosed, ford-haunting Mugger of the Ganges—draggled herself before the beasts, lashing furiously to right and left with her tail.

'They have made it too strong for me. In all this night I have only torn away a handful of planks. The walls stand! The towers stand! They have chained my flood, and my river is not free any more. Heavenly Ones, take this yoke away! Give me clear water between bank and bank! It is I, Mother Gunga, that speak. The Justice of the Gods! Deal me the Justice of the Gods!'

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‘What said I?’ whispered Peroo. ‘This is in truth a Punchayet of the Gods. Now we know that all the world is dead, save you and I, Sahib.’

The Parrot screamed and fluttered again, and the Tigress, her ears flat to her head, snarled wickedly.

Somewhere in the shadow a great trunk and gleaming tusks swayed to and fro, and a low gurgle broke the silence that followed on the snarl.

‘We be here,’ said a deep voice, ‘the Great Ones. One only and very many. Shiv, my father, is here, with Indra. Kali has spoken already. Hanuman listens also.’

‘Kashi is without her Kotwal to-night,’ shouted the Man with the drinking-bottle, flinging his staff to the ground, while the island rang to the baying of hounds. ‘Give her the Justice of the Gods.’

‘Ye were still when they polluted my waters,’ the great Crocodile bellowed. ‘Ye made no sign when my river was trapped between the walls. I had no help save my own strength, and that failed—the strength of Mother Gunga failed—before their guard-towers. What could I do? I have done everything. Finish now, Heavenly Ones!’

‘I brought the death; I rode the spotted sickness from hut to hut of their workmen, and yet they would not cease.’ A nose-slitten, hide-worn Ass, lame, scissor-legged, and galled, limped forward. ‘I cast the death at them out of my nostrils, but they would not cease.’

Peroo would have moved, but the opium lay heavy upon him.

‘Bah!’ he said, spitting. ‘Here is Sitala herself; Mata—the small-pox. Has the Sahib a handkerchief to put over his face?’

‘Small help!’ said the Crocodile. ‘They fed me the

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corpses for a month, and I flung them out on my sand-bars, but their work went forward. Demons they are, and sons of demons! And ye left Mother Gunga alone for their fire-carriage to make a mock of. The Justice of the Gods on the bridge-builders!’

The Bull turned the cud in his mouth and answered slowly, ‘If the Justice of the Gods caught all who made a mock of holy things, there would be many dark altars in the land, mother.’

‘But this goes beyond a mock,’ said the Tigress, darting forward a griping paw. ‘Thou knowest, Shiv, and ye too, Heavenly Ones; ye know that they have defiled Gunga. Surely they must come to the Destroyer. Let Indra judge.’

The Buck made no movement as he answered, ‘How long has this evil been?’

‘Three years, as men count years,’ said the Mugger, close pressed to the earth.

‘Does Mother Gunga die, then, in a year, that she is so anxious to see vengeance now? The deep sea was where she runs but yesterday, and to-morrow the sea shall cover her again as the Gods count that which men call time. Can any say that this their bridge endures till to-morrow?’ said the Buck.

There was a long hush, and in the clearing of the storm the full moon stood up above the dripping trees.

‘Judge ye, then,’ said the Mugger sullenly. ‘I have spoken my shame. The flood falls still. I can do no more.’

‘For my own part’—it was the voice of the great Ape seated within the shrine—‘it pleases me well to watch these men, remembering that I also builded no small bridge in the world’s youth.’

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‘They say, too,’ snarled the Tiger, ‘that these men came of the wreck of thy armies, Hanuman, and therefore thou hast aided—’

‘They toil as my armies toiled in Lanka, and they believe that their toil endures. Indra is too high, but Shiv, thou knowest how the land is threaded with their fire-carriages.’

‘Yea, I know,’ said the Bull. ‘Their Gods instructed them in the matter.’

A laugh ran round the circle.

‘Their Gods! What should their Gods know? They were born yesterday, and those that made them are scarcely yet cold,’ said the Mugger. ‘To-morrow their Gods will die.’

‘Ho!’ said Peroo. ‘Mother Gunga talks good talk. I told that to the padre-sahib who preached on the “Mombassa,” and he asked the Burra Malum to put me in irons for a great rudeness.’

‘Surely they make these things to please their Gods,’ said the Bull again.

‘Not altogether,’ the Elephant rolled forth. ‘It is for the profit of my mahajuns—my fat money-lenders that worship me at each new year, when they draw my image at the head of the account-books. I, looking over their shoulders by lamp-light, see that the names in the books are those of men in far places—for all the towns are drawn together by the fire-carriage, and the money comes and goes swiftly, and the account-books grow as fat as—myself. And I, who am Ganesh of Good Luck, I bless my peoples.’

‘They have changed the face of the land—which is my land. They have killed and made new towns on my banks,’ said the Mugger.

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‘It is but the shifting of a little dirt. Let the dirt dig in the dirt if it pleases the dirt,’ answered the Elephant.

‘But afterwards?’ said the Tiger. ‘Afterwards they will see that Mother Gunga can avenge no insult, and they fall away from her first, and later from us all, one by one. In the end, Ganesh, we are left with naked altars.’

The drunken Man staggered to his feet, and hiccupped vehemently in the face of the assembled Gods.

‘Kali lies. My sister lies. Also this my stick is the Kotwal of Kashi, and he keeps tally of my pilgrims. When the time comes to worship Bhairon—and it is always time—the fire-carriages move one by one, and each bears a thousand pilgrims. They do not come afoot any more, but rolling upon wheels, and my honour is increased.’

‘Gunga, I have seen thy bed at Pryag black with the pilgrims,’ said the Ape, leaning forward, ‘and but for the fire-carriage they would have come slowly and in fewer numbers. Remember.’

‘They come to me always,’ Bhairon went on thickly. ‘By day and night they pray to me, all the Common People in the fields and the roads. Who is like Bhairon to-day? What talk is this of changing faiths? Is my staff Kotwal of Kashi for nothing? He keeps the tally, and he says that never were so many altars as to-day, and the fire-carriage serves them well. Bhairon am I—Bhairon of the Common People, and the chiefest of the Heavenly Ones to-day. Also my staff says—’

‘Peace, thou!’ lowed the Bull. ‘The worship of the schools is mine, and they talk very wisely, asking whether I be one or many, as is the delight of my people, and ye know what I am. Kali, my wife, thou knowest also.’

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‘Yea, I know,’ said the Tigress, with lowered head.

‘Greater am I than Gunga also. For ye know who moved the minds of men that they should count Gunga holy among the rivers. Who die in that water—ye know how men say—come to Us without punishment, and Gunga knows that the fire-carriage has borne to her scores upon scores of such anxious ones; and Kali knows that she has held her chiefest festivals among the pilgrimages that are fed by the fire-carriage. Who smote at Pooree, under the Image there, her thousands in a day and a night, and bound the sickness to the wheels of the fire-carriages, so that it ran from one end of the land to the other? Who but Kali? Before the fire-carriage came it was a heavy toil. The fire-carriages have served thee well, Mother of Death. But I speak for mine own altars, who am not Bhairon of the Common Folk, but Shiv. Men go to and fro, making words and telling talk of strange Gods, and I listen. Faith follows faith among my people in the schools, and I have no anger; for when the words are said, and the new talk is ended, to Shiv men return at the last.’

‘True. It is true,’ murmured Hanuman. ‘To Shiv and to the others, mother, they return. I creep from temple to temple in the North, where they worship one God and His Prophet; and presently my image is alone within their shrines.’

‘Small thanks,’ said the Buck, turning his head slowly. ‘I am that One and His Prophet also.’

‘Even so, father,’ said Hanuman. ‘And to the South I go who am the oldest of the Gods as men know the Gods, and presently I touch the shrines of the new faith and the Woman whom we know is hewn twelve-armed, and still they call her Mary.’

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‘Small thanks, brother,’ said the Tigress. ‘I am that Woman.’

‘Even so, sister; and I go West among the fire-carriages, and stand before the bridge-builders in many shapes, and because of me they change their faiths and are very wise. Ho! ho! I am the builder of bridges indeed—bridges between this and that, and each bridge leads surely to Us in the end. Be content, Gunga. Neither these men nor those that follow them mock thee at all.’

‘Am I alone, then, Heavenly Ones? Shall I smooth out my flood lest unhappily I bear away their walls? Will Indra dry my springs in the hills and make me crawl humbly between their wharfs? Shall I bury me in the sand ere I offend?’

‘And all for the sake of a little iron bar with the fire-carriage atop. Truly, Mother Gunga is always young!’ said Ganesh the Elephant. ‘A child had not spoken more foolishly. Let the dirt dig in the dirt ere it return to the dirt. I know only that my people grow rich and praise me. Shiv has said that the men of the schools do not forget; Bhairon is content for his crowd of the Common People: and Hanuman laughs.’

‘Surely I laugh,’ said the Ape. ‘My altars are few beside those of Ganesh or Bhairon, but the fire-carriages bring me new worshippers from beyond the Black Water—the men who believe that their God is toil. I run before them beckoning, and they follow Hanuman.’

‘Give them the toil that they desire, then,’ said the Mugger. ‘Make a bar across my flood and throw the water back upon the bridge. Once thou wast strong in Lanka, Hanuman. Stoop and lift my bed.’

‘Who gives life can take life.’ The Ape scratched in

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the mud with a long forefinger. 'And yet, who would profit by the killing? Very many would die.'

There came up from the water a snatch of a love-song such as the boys sing when they watch their cattle in the noon heats of late spring. The Parrot screamed joyously, sidling along his branch with lowered head as the song grew louder, and in a patch of clear moonlight stood revealed the young herd, the darling of the Gopis, the idol of dreaming maids and of mothers ere their children are born—Krishna the Well-beloved. He stooped to knot up his long wet hair, and the Parrot fluttered to his shoulder.

'Fleeting and singing, and singing and fleeting,' hiccupped Bhairon. 'Those make thee late for the council, brother.'

'And then?' said Krishna, with a laugh, throwing back his head. 'Ye can do little without me or Karma here.' He fondled the Parrot's plumage and laughed again. 'What is this sitting and talking together? I heard Mother Gunga roaring in the dark, and so came quickly from a hut where I lay warm. And what have ye done to Karma, that he is so wet and silent? And what does Mother Gunga here? Are the heavens full that ye must come paddling in the mud beast-wise? Karma, what do they do?'

'Gunga has prayed for a vengeance on the bridge-builders, and Kali is with her. Now she bids Hanuman whelm the bridge, that her honour may be made great,' cried the Parrot. 'I waited here, knowing that thou wouldst come, O my master!'

'And the Heavenly Ones said nothing? Did Gunga and the Mother of Sorrows outtalk them? Did none speak for my people?'

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‘Nay,’ said Ganesh, moving uneasily from foot to foot; ‘I said it was but dirt at play, and why should we stamp it flat?’

‘I was content to let them toil—well content,’ said Hanuman.

‘What had I to do with Gunga’s anger?’ said the Bull.

‘I am Bhairon of the Common Folk, and this my staff is Kotwal of all Kashi. I spoke for the Common People.’

‘Thou?’ The young God’s eyes sparkled.

‘Am I not the first of the Gods in their mouths to-day?’ returned Bhairon, unabashed. ‘For the sake of the Common People I said—very many wise things which I have now forgotten—but this my staff—’

Krishna turned impatiently, saw the Mugger at his feet, and kneeling, slipped an arm round the cold neck. ‘Mother,’ he said gently, ‘get thee to thy flood again. The matter is not for thee. What harm shall thy honour take of this live dirt? Thou hast given them their fields new year after year, and by thy flood they are made strong. They come all to thee at the last. What need to slay them now? Have pity, mother, for a little—and it is only for a little.’

‘If it be only for a little—’ the slow beast began.

‘Are they Gods, then?’ Krishna returned with a laugh, his eyes looking into the dull eyes of the Mugger. ‘Be certain that it is only for a little. The Heavenly Ones have heard thee, and presently justice will be done. Go now, mother, to the flood again. Men and cattle are thick on the waters—the banks fall—the villages melt because of thee.’

‘But the bridge—the bridge stands.’ The Mugger turned grunting into the undergrowth as Krishna rose.

‘It is ended,’ said the Tigress, viciously. ‘There is

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no more justice from the Heavenly Ones. Ye have made shame and sport of Gunga, who asked no more than a few score lives.'

'Of my people—who lie under the leaf-roofs of the village yonder—of the young girls, and the young men who sing to them in the dark—of the child that will be born next morn—of that which was begotten to-night,' said Krishna. 'And when all is done, what profit? To-morrow sees them at work. Ay, if ye swept the bridge out from end to end they would begin anew. Hear me! Bhairon is drunk always. Hanuman mocks his people with new riddles.'

'Nay, but they are very old ones,' the Ape said, laughing.

'Shiv hears the talk of the schools and the dreams of the holy men. Ganesh thinks only of his fat traders; but I—I live with these my people, asking for no gifts, and so receiving them hourly.'

'And very tender art thou of thy people,' said the Tigress.

'They are my own. The old women dream of me, turning in their sleep; the maids look and listen for me when they go to fill their lotahs by the river. I walk by the young men waiting without the gates at dusk, and I call over my shoulder to the white-beards. Ye know, Heavenly Ones, that I alone of us all walk upon the earth continually, and have no pleasure in our heavens so long as a green blade springs here, or there are two voices at twilight in the standing crops. Wise are ye, but ye live far off, forgetting whence ye came. So do I not forget. And the fire-carriage feeds your shrines, ye say? And the fire-carriages bring a thousand pilgrimages where but ten came in the old years? True. That is true to-day.'

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‘But to-morrow they are dead, brother,’ said Ganesh.

‘Peace!’ said the Bull, as Hanuman leaned forward again. ‘And to-morrow, beloved—what of to-morrow?’

‘This only. A new word creeping from mouth to mouth among the Common Folk—a word that neither man nor God can lay hold of—an evil word—a little lazy word among the Common Folk, saying (and none know who set that word afoot) that they weary of ye, Heavenly Ones.’

The Gods laughed together softly. ‘And then, beloved?’ they said.

‘And to cover that weariness they, my people, will bring to thee, Shiv, and to thee, Ganesh, at first greater offerings and a louder noise of worship. But the word has gone abroad, and, after, they will pay fewer dues to your fat Brahmins. Next they will forget your altars, but so slowly that no man can say how his forgetfulness began.’

‘I knew—I knew! I spoke this also, but they would not hear,’ said the Tigress. ‘We should have slain—we should have slain!’

‘It is too late now. Ye should have slain at the beginning, when the men from across the water had taught our folk nothing. Now my people see their work, and go away thinking. They do not think of the Heavenly Ones altogether. They think of the fire-carriage and the other things that the bridge-builders have done, and when your priests thrust forward hands asking alms, they give unwillingly a little. That is the beginning, among one or two, or five or ten—for I, moving among my people, know what is in their hearts.’

‘And the end, Jester of the Gods? What shall the end be?’ said Ganesh.

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‘The end shall be as it was in the beginning, O slothful son of Shiv! The flame shall die upon the altars and the prayer upon the tongue till ye become little Gods again—Gods of the jungle—names that the hunters of rats and noosers of dogs whisper in the thicket and among the caves—rag-Gods, pot Godlings of the tree, and the village-mark, as ye were at the beginning. That is the end, Ganesh, for thee, and for Bhairon—Bhairon of the Common People.’

‘It is very far away,’ grunted Bhairon. ‘Also, it is a lie.’

‘Many women have kissed Krishna. They told him this to cheer their own hearts when the gray hairs came, and he has told us the tale,’ said the Bull, below his breath.

‘Their Gods came, and we changed them. I took the Woman and made her twelve-armed. So shall we twist all their Gods,’ said Hanuman.

‘Their Gods! This is no question of their Gods—one or three—man or woman. The matter is with the people. They move, and not the Gods of the bridge-builders,’ said Krishna.

‘So be it. I have made a man worship the fire-carriage as it stood still breathing smoke, and he knew not that he worshipped me,’ said Hanuman the Ape. ‘They will only change a little the names of their Gods. I shall lead the builders of the bridges as of old; Shiv shall be worshipped in the schools by such as doubt and despise their fellows; Ganesh shall have his mahajuns, and Bhairon the donkey-drivers, the pilgrims, and the sellers of toys. Beloved, they will do no more than change the names, and that we have seen a thousand times.’

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‘Surely they will do no more than change the names,’ echoed Ganesh: but there was an uneasy movement among the Gods.

‘They will change more than the names. Me alone they cannot kill, so long as maiden and man meet together or the spring follows the winter rains. Heavenly Ones, not for nothing have I walked upon the earth. My people know not now what they know; but I, who live with them, I read their hearts. Great Kings, the beginning of the end is born already. The fire-carriages shout the names of new Gods that are not the old under new names. Drink now and eat greatly! Bathe your faces in the smoke of the altars before they grow cold! Take dues and listen to the cymbals and the drums, Heavenly Ones, while yet there are flowers and songs. As men count time the end is far off; but as we who know reckon it is to-day. I have spoken.’

The young God ceased, and his brethren looked at each other long in silence.

‘This I have not heard before,’ Peroo whispered in his companion’s ear. ‘And yet sometimes, when I oiled the brasses in the engine-room of the “Goorkha,” I have wondered if our priests were so wise—so wise. The day is coming, Sahib. They will be gone by the morning.’

A yellow light broadened in the sky, and the tone of the river changed as the darkness withdrew.

Suddenly the Elephant trumpeted aloud as though man had goaded him.

‘Let Indra judge. Father of all, speak thou! What of the things we have heard? Has Krishna lied indeed? Or—’

‘Ye know,’ said the Buck, rising to his feet. ‘Ye know the Riddle of the Gods. When Brahm ceases to

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dream the Heavens and the Hells and Earth disappear. Be content. Brahm dreams still. The dreams come and go, and the nature of the dreams changes, but still Brahm dreams. Krishna has walked too long upon earth, and yet I love him the more for the tale he has told. The Gods change, beloved—all save One!

‘Ay, all save one that makes love in the hearts of men,’ said Krishna, knotting his girdle. ‘It is but a little time to wait, and ye shall know if I lie.’

‘Truly it is but a little time, as thou sayest, and we shall know. Get thee to thy huts again, beloved, and make sport for the young things, for still Brahm dreams. Go, my children! Brahm dreams—and till He wakes the Gods die not.’

‘Whither went they?’ said the Lascar, awestruck, shivering a little with the cold.

‘God knows!’ said Findlayson. The river and the island lay in full daylight now, and there was never mark of hoof or pug on the wet earth under the peepul. Only a parrot screamed in the branches, bringing down showers of water-drops as he fluttered his wings.

‘Up! We are cramped with cold! Has the opium died out? Canst thou move, Sahib?’

Findlayson staggered to his feet and shook himself. His head swam and ached, but the work of the opium was over, and, as he sluiced his forehead in a pool, the Chief Engineer of the Kashi Bridge was wondering how he had managed to fall upon the island, what chances the day offered of return, and, above all, how his work stood.

‘Peroo, I have forgotten much. I was under the guard-tower watching the river; and then— Did the flood sweep us away?’

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‘No. The boats broke loose, Sahib, and’ (if the Sahib had forgotten about the opium, decidedly Peroo would not remind him) ‘in striving to retie them, so it seemed to me—but it was dark—a rope caught the Sahib and threw him upon a boat. Considering that we two, with Hitchcock Sahib, built, as it were, that bridge, I came also upon the boat, which came riding on horseback, as it were, on the nose of this island, and so, splitting, cast us ashore. I made a great cry when the boat left the wharf, and without doubt Hitchcock Sahib will come for us. As for the bridge, so many have died in the building that it cannot fall.’

A fierce sun, that drew out all the smell of the sodden land, had followed the storm, and in that clear light there was no room for a man to think of dreams of the dark. Findlayson stared up-stream, across the blaze of moving water, till his eyes ached. There was no sign of any bank to the Ganges, much less of a bridge-line.

‘We came down far,’ he said. ‘It was wonderful that we were not drowned a hundred times.’

‘That was the least of the wonder, for no man dies before his time. I have seen Sydney, I have seen London, and twenty great ports, but’—Peroo looked at the damp, discoloured shrine under the peepul—‘never man has seen that we saw here.’

‘What?’

‘Has the Sahib forgotten; or do we black men only see the Gods?’

‘There was a fever upon me.’ Findlayson was still looking uneasily across the water. ‘It seemed that the island was full of beasts and men talking, but I do not remember. A boat could live in this water now, I think.’

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‘Oho! Then it is true. “When Brahm ceases to dream, the Gods die.” Now I know, indeed, what he meant. Once, too, the guru said as much to me; but then I did not understand. Now I am wise.’

‘What?’ said Findlayson over his shoulder.

Peroo went on as if he were talking to himself. ‘Six—seven—ten monsoons since, I was watch on the fo’c’sle of the “Rewah”—the Kumpani’s big boat—and there was a big tufan, green and black water beating; and I held fast to the life-lines, choking under the waters. Then I thought of the Gods—of Those whom we saw to-night’—he stared curiously at Findlayson’s back, but the white man was looking across the flood. ‘Yes, I say of Those whom we saw this night past, and I called upon Them to protect me. And while I prayed, still keeping my look-out, a big wave came and threw me forward upon the ring of the great black bow-anchor, and the “Rewah” rose high and high, leaning towards the left-hand side, and the water drew away from beneath her nose, and I lay upon my belly, holding the ring, and looking down into those great deeps. Then I thought, even in the face of death, if I lose hold I die, and for me neither the “Rewah” nor my place by the galley where the rice is cooked, nor Bombay, nor Calcutta, nor even London, will be any more for me. “How shall I be sure,” I said, “that the Gods to whom I pray will abide at all?” This I thought, and the “Rewah” dropped her nose as a hammer falls, and all the sea came in and slid me backwards along the fo’c’sle and over the break of the fo’c’sle, and I very badly bruised my shin against the donkey-engine: but I did not die, and I have seen the Gods. They are good for live men, but for the dead— They have spoken Themselves. Therefore,

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when I come to the village I will beat the guru for talking riddles which are no riddles. When Brahm ceases to dream, the Gods go.'

'Look up-stream. The light blinds. Is there smoke yonder?'

Péroo shaded his eyes with his hands. 'He is a wise man and quick. Hitchcock Sahib would not trust a row-boat. He has borrowed the Rao Sahib's steam-launch, and comes to look for us. I have always said that there should have been a steam-launch on the bridge-works for us.'

The territory of the Rao of Baraon lay within ten miles of the bridge; and Findlayson and Hitchcock had spent a fair portion of their scanty leisure in playing billiards and shooting blackbuck with the young man. He had been bear-led by an English tutor of sporting tastes for some five or six years, and was now royally wasting the revenues accumulated during his minority by the Indian Government. His steam-launch, with its silver-plated rails, striped silk awning, and mahogany decks, was a new toy which Findlayson had found horribly in the way when the Rao came to look at the bridge-works.

'It's great luck,' murmured Findlayson, but he was none the less afraid, wondering what news might be of the bridge.

The gaudy blue and white funnel came down-stream swiftly. They could see Hitchcock in the bows, with a pair of opera-glasses, and his face was unusually white. Then Peroo hailed, and the launch made for the tail of the island. The Rao Sahib, in tweed shooting-suit and a seven-hued turban, waved his royal hand, and Hitchcock shouted. But he need have asked no questions, for Findlayson's first demand was for his bridge.

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'All serene! 'Gad, I never expected to see you again, Findlayson. You're seven koss down-stream. Yes, there's not a stone shifted anywhere; but how are you? I borrowed the Rao Sahib's launch, and he was good enough to come along. Jump in.'

'Ah, Finlinson, you are very well, eh? That was most unprecedented calamity last night, eh? My royal palace, too, it leaks like the devil, and the crops will also be short all about my country. Now you shall back her out, Hitchcock. I—I do not understand steam-engines. You are wet? You are cold, Finlinson? I have some things to eat here, and you will take a good drink.'

'I'm immensely grateful, Rao Sahib. I believe you've saved my life. How did Hitchcock—'

'Oho! His hair was upon end. He rode to me in the middle of the night and woke me up in the arms of Morphus. I was most truly concerned, Finlinson, so I came too. My head-priest he is very angry just now. We will go quick, Mister Hitchcock. I am due to attend at twelve forty-five in the state temple, where we sanctify some new idol. If not so I would have asked you to spend the day with me. They are dam-bore, these religious ceremonies, Finlinson, eh?'

Peroo, well known to the crew, had possessed himself of the wheel, and was taking the launch craftily upstream. But while he steered he was, in his mind, handling two feet of partially untwisted wire rope; and the back upon which he beat was the back of his guru.

A WALKING DELEGATE

(1894)

ACCORDING to the custom of Vermont, Sunday afternoon is salting-time on the farm, and, unless something very important happens, we attend to the salting ourselves. Dave and Pete, the red oxen, are treated first; they stay in the home meadow, ready for work on Monday. Then come the cows, with Pan, the calf, who should have been turned into veal long ago, but survived on account of his manners; and, lastly, the horses, scattered through the seventy acres of the Back Pasture.

You must go down by the brook that feeds the clicking, bubbling water-ram; up through the sugar-bush; where the young maple undergrowth closes round you like a shallow sea; next follow the faint line of an old county-road running past two green hollows fringed with wild rose that mark the cellars of two ruined houses; then by Lost Orchard, where nobody ever comes except in cider-time; then across another brook, and so into the Back Pasture. Half of it is pine and hemlock and spruce, with sumach and little juniper-bushes, and the other half is gray rock and boulder and moss, with green streaks of brake and swamp; but the horses like it well enough—our own, and the others that are turned down there to feed at fifty cents a week. Most people walk

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to the Back Pasture, and find it very rough work; but one can get there in a buggy, if the horse knows what is expected of him. The safest conveyance is our coupe. This began life as a buckboard, and we bought it for five dollars from a sorrowful man who had no other sort of possessions; and the seat came off one night when we were turning a corner in a hurry. After that alteration it made a beautiful salting-machine, if you held tight, because there was nothing to catch your feet when you fell out, and the slats rattled tunes.

One Sunday afternoon we went out with the salt as usual. It was a broiling hot day, and we could not find the horses anywhere till we let Tedda Gabler, the bob-tailed mare who throws up the dirt with her big hoofs exactly as a tedder throws hay, have her head. Clever as she is, she tipped the coupe over in a hidden brook before she came out on a ledge of rock where all the horses had gathered and were switching flies. The Deacon was the first to call to her. He is a very dark iron-gray four-year-old, son of Grandee. He has been handled since he was two, was driven in a light cart before he was three, and now ranks as an absolutely steady lady's horse—proof against steam rollers, grade-crossings, and street processions.

'Salt!' said the Deacon, joyfully. 'You're dreffle late, Tedda.'

'Any—any place to cramp the coupe?' Tedda panted. 'It draws turr'ble this weather. I'd 'a' come sooner, but they didn't know what they wanted—ner haow. Fell out twice, both of them. I don't understand sech foolishness.'

'You look consider'ble het up. Guess you'd better cramp her under them pines, an' cool off a piece.'

A WALKING DELEGATE

Tedda scrambled on the ledge, and cramped the coupe in the shade of a tiny little wood of pines, while my companion and I lay down among the brown, silky needles, and gasped. All the home horses were gathered round us, enjoying their Sunday leisure.

There were Rod and Rick, the seniors on the farm. They were the regular road-pair, bay with black points, full brothers, aged, sons of a Hambletonian sire and a Morgan dam. There were Nip and Tuck, seal-browns, rising six, brother and sister, Black Hawks by birth, perfectly matched, just finishing their education, and as handsome a pair as man could wish to find in a forty-mile drive. There was Muldoon, our ex-car-horse, bought at a venture, and any colour you choose that is not white; and Tweezy, who comes from Kentucky, with an affliction of his left hip, which makes him a little uncertain how his hind legs are moving. He and Muldoon had been hauling gravel all the week for our new road. The Deacon you know already. Last of all, and eating something, was our faithful Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, the black buggy-horse, who had seen us through every state of weather and road, the horse who was always standing in harness before some door or other—a philosopher with the appetite of a shark and the manners of an archbishop. Tedda Gabler was a new 'trade,' with a reputation for vice which was really the result of bad driving. She had one working gait, which she could hold till further notice; a Roman nose; a large, prominent eye; a shaving-brush of a tail; and an irritable temper. She took her salt through her bridle; but the others trotted up nuzzling and wickering for theirs, till we emptied it on the clean rocks. They were all standing at ease, on three legs for the most part, talk-

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ing the ordinary gossip of the Back Pasture—about the scarcity of water, and gaps in the fence, and how the early windfalls tasted that season—when little Rick blew the last few grains of his allowance into a crevice, and said:

‘Hurry, boys!’ Might ha’ knowed that Livery-plug would be around.’

We heard a clatter of hoofs, and there climbed up from the ravine below a fifty-center transient—a wall-eyed, yellow frame-house of a horse, sent up to board from a livery-stable in town, where they called him ‘The Lamb,’ and never let him out except at night and to strangers. My companion, who knew and had broken most of the horses, looked at the ragged hammer-head as it rose, and said quietly:

‘Nice beast, Man-eater, if he gets the chance—see his eye. Kicker, too—see his hocks. Western horse.’

The animal lumbered up, snuffling and grunting. His feet showed that he had not worked for weeks and weeks, and our creatures drew together significantly.

‘As usual,’ he said, with an underhung sneer—‘bowin’ your heads before the Oppressor, that comes to spend his leisure gloatin’ over you.’

‘Mine’s done,’ said the Deacon; he licked up the remnant of his salt, dropped his nose in his master’s hand, and sang a little grace all to himself. The Deacon has the most enchanting manners of any one I know.

‘An’ fawnin’ on them for what is your inalienable right. It’s humiliatin’,’ said the yellow horse, sniffing to see if he could find a few spare grains.

‘Go daown hill, then, Boney,’ the Deacon replied. ‘Guess you’ll find somefin’ to eat still, if yer hain’t hogged it all. You’ve ett more’n any three of us to-day

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—an' day 'fore that—an' the last two months—sence you've been here.'

'I am not addressin' myself to the young an' immature. I am speakin' to those whose opinion an' experience commands respect.'

I saw Rod raise his head as though he were about to make a remark; then he dropped it again, and stood three-cornered, like a plough-horse. Rod can cover his mile in a shade under three minutes on an ordinary road to an ordinary buggy. He is tremendously powerful behind, but, like most Hambletonians, he grows a trifle sullen as he gets older. No one can love Rod very much; but no one can help respecting him.

'I wish to wake those,' the yellow horse went on, 'to an abidin' sense o' their wrongs an' their injuries an' their outrages.'

'Haow's that?' said Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, dreamily. He thought Boney was talking of some kind of feed.

'An' when I say outrages and injuries'—Boney waved his tail furiously—'I mean 'em, too. Great Oats! That's just what I do mean, plain an' straight.'

'The gentleman talks quite earnest,' said Tuck the mare, to Nip, her brother. 'There's no doubt thinkin' broadens the horizons o' the mind. His language is right lofty.'

'Hesh, sis,' Nip answered. 'He hain't widened nothin' 'cep' the circle he's ett in pasture. They feed words fer beddin' where he comes from.'

'It's elegant talkin', though,' Tuck returned, with an unconvinced toss of her pretty, lean little head.

The yellow horse heard her, and struck an attitude which he meant to be extremely impressive. It made him look as though he had been badly stuffed.

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'Now I ask you—I ask you without prejudice an' without favour—what has Man the Oppressor ever done for you? Are you not inalienably entitled to the free air o' heaven, blowin' acrost this boundless prairie?'

'Hev ye ever wintered here?' said the Deacon, merrily, while the others snickered. 'It's kinder cool.'

'Not yet,' said Boney. 'I come from the boundless confines o' Kansas, where the noblest of our kind have their abidin'-place among the sunflowers on the threshold o' the settin' sun in his glory.'

'An' they sent you ahead as a sample?' said Rick, with an amused quiver of his long, beautifully-groomed tail, as thick and as fine and as wavy as a quadroon's back hair.

'Kansas, sir, needs no adver-tise-ment. Her native sons rely on themselves an' their native sires. Yes, sir.'

Then Tweezy lifted up his wise and polite old face. His affliction makes him bashful as a rule, but he is ever the most courteous of horses.

'Excuse me, suh,' he said slowly, 'but, unless I have been misinfohmed, most of your prominent siahs, suh, are impo'ted from Kentucky; an' I'm from Paduky.'

There was the least little touch of pride in the last words.

'Any horse dat knows beans,' said Muldoon, suddenly (he had been standing with his hairy chin on Tweezy's broad quarters), 'gets outer Kansas 'fore dey crip his shoes. I blew in dere frum Ioway in de days o' me youth an' innocence, and I wuz grateful when dey boxed me fer N' York. You can't tell me anything about Kansas I don't wantar fergit. De Belt Line stables ain't no Hoffman House, but dey're Vanderbilt's 'longside o' Kansas.'

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‘What the horses o’ Kansas think to-day, the horses of America will think to-morrow; an’ I tell you that when the horses of America rise in their might, the day o’ the Oppressor is ended.’

There was a pause, till Rick said, with a little grunt:

‘Ef you put it that way, every one of us has riz in his might, ’cep’ Marcus, mebbe. Marky, ’j ever rise in yer might?’

‘Nope,’ said Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, thoughtfully quidding over a mouthful of grass. ‘I seen a heap o’ fools try, though.’

‘You admit that you riz?’ said the Kansas horse, excitedly. ‘Then why—why in Kansas did you ever go under again?’

‘Horse can’t walk on his hind legs all the time,’ said the Deacon.

‘Not when he’s jerked over on his back ’fore he knows what fetched him. We’ve all done it, Boney,’ said Rick. ‘Nip an’ Tuck, they tried it, spite o’ what the Deacon told ’em; and the Deacon, he tried it, spite o’ what me an’ Rod told him; an’ me an’ Rod tried it, spite o’ what Grandee told us; an’ I guess Grandee he tried it, spite o’ what his dam told him. It’s the same old circus from generation to generation. ’Colt can’t see why he’s called on to back. Same old rearin’ on end—straight up. Same old feelin’ that you’ve bested ’em this time. Same old little yank at yer mouth when you’re up good an’ tall. Same old Pegasus-act, wonderin’ where you’ll ’light. Same old wop when you hit the dirt with your head where your tail should be, and your in’ards shook up like a bran-mash. Same old voice in your ear, “Waal, ye little fool, an’ what did you reckon to make by that?” We’re through with risin’

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in our might on this farm. We go to pole er single, accordin' ez we're hitched.'

'An' Man the Oppressor sets an' gloats over you, same as he's settin' now. Hain't that been your experience, madam?'

This last remark was addressed to Tedda, and any one could see with half an eye that poor, old, anxious, fidgety Tedda, stamping at the flies, must have left a wild and tumultuous youth behind her.

'Pends on the man,' she answered, shifting from one foot to the other, and addressing herself to the home horses. 'They abused me dreffle when I was young. I guess I was sperrity an' nervous some, but they didn't allow for that. 'Twas in Monroe County, Noo York, an' sence then till I come here, I've run away with more men than 'u'd fill a boardin'-house. Why, the man that sold me here he says to the boss, s' he: "Mind, now, I've warned you. 'Twon't be none of my fault if she sheds you daown the road. Don't you drive her in a top-buggy, ner 'thout winkers," s' he, "ner 'thout this bit, ef you look to come home behind her." 'N' the fust thing the boss did was to git the top-buggy.'

'Can't say as I like top-buggies,' said Rick; 'they don't balance good.'

'Suit me to a harr,' said Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. 'Top-buggy means the baby's in behind, an' I kin stop while she gathers the pretty flowers—yes, an' pick a maouthful, too. The women-folk all say I hev to be humoured, an'—I don't kerry things to the sweatin'-point.'

'Course I've no pre-ju-dice against a top-buggy s' long's I can see it,' Tedda went on quickly. 'It's ha'f-seein' the pesky thing bobbin' an' balancin' behind the

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winkers gets on my nerves. Then the boss looked at the bit they'd sold with me, an' s' he: "Jiminy Christmas! This 'u'd make a clothes-horse stan' 'n end!" Then he gave me a plain bar bit, an' fitted it 's if there was some feelin' to my maouth.'

'Hain't ye got any, Miss Tedda?' said Tuck, who has a mouth like velvet, and knows it.

'Might 'a' had, Miss Tuck, but I've forgot. Then he gave me an open bridle,—my style's an open bridle—an'—I dunno as I ought to tell this by rights—he give—me—a kiss.'

'My!' said Tuck, 'I can't tell fer the shoes o' me what makes some men so fresh.'

'Pshaw, sis,' said Nip, 'what's the sense in actin' so? You git a kiss reg'lar's hitchin'-up time.'

'Well, you needn't tell, smarty,' said Tuck, with a squeal and a kick.

'I'd heard o' kisses, o' course,' Tedda went on, 'but they hadn't come my way specially. I don't mind tellin' I was that took aback at that man's doin's he might ha' lit fire-crackers on my saddle. Then we went out jest's if a kiss was nothin', an' I wasn't three strides into my gait 'fore I felt the boss knoo his business, an' was trustin' me. So I studied to please him, an' he never took the whip from the dash—a whip drives me plumb distracted—an' the upshot was that—waal, I've come up the Back Pasture to-day, an' the coupe's tipped clear over twice, an' I've waited till 'twuz fixed each time. You kin judge for yourselves. I don't set up to be no better than my neighbours,—specially with my tail snipped off the way 'tis,—but I want you all to know Tedda's quit fightin' in harness or out of it, 'cep' when there's a born fool in the pasture, stuffin' his stummick

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with board that ain't rightly hisn, 'cause he hain't earned it.'

'Meanin' me, madam?' said the yellow horse.

'Ef the shoe fits, clinch it,' said Tedda, snorting. 'I named no names, though, to be sure, some folks are mean enough an' greedy enough to do 'thout 'em.'

'There's a deal to be forgiven to ignorance,' said the yellow horse, with an ugly look in his blue eye.

'Seemin'ly, yes; or some folks 'u'd ha' been kicked raound the pasture 'bout onct a minute sence they came—board er no board.'

'But what you do not understand, if you will excuse me, madam, is that the whole principle o' servitood, which includes keep an' feed, starts from a radically false basis; an' I am proud to say that me an' the majority o' the horses o' Kansas think the entire concern should be relegated to the limbo of exploded superstitions. I say we're too progressive for that. I say we're too enlightened for that. 'Twas good enough's long's we didn't think, but now—but naow—a new loominary has arisen on the horizon!'

'Meanin' you?' said the Deacon.

'The horses o' Kansas are behind me with their multitoodinous thunderin' hoofs, an' we say, simply but grandly, that we take our stand with all four feet on the inalienable rights of the horse, pure and simple,—the high-toned child o' nature, fed by the same wavin' grass, cooled by the same ripplin' brook,—yes, an' warmed by the same gen'rous sun as falls impartially on the outside an' the inside of the pampered machine o' the trottin'-track, or the bloated coupe-horses o' these yere Eastern cities. Are we not the same flesh and blood?'

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‘Not by a bushel an’ a half,’ said the Deacon, under his breath. ‘Grandee never was in Kansas.’

‘My! Ain’t that elegant, though, ababout the wavin’ grass an’ the ripplin’ brooks?’ Tuck whispered in Nip’s ear. ‘The gentleman’s real convincin’, I think.’

‘I say we are the same flesh an’ blood! Are we to be separated, horse from horse, by the artificial barriers of a trottin’-record, or are we to look down upon each other on the strength o’ the gifts o’ nature—an extry inch below the knee, or slightly more powerful quarters? What’s the use o’ them advantages to you? Man the Oppressor comes along, an’ sees you’re likely an’ good-lookin’, an’ grinds you to the face o’ the earth. What for? For his own pleasure: for his own convenience! Young an’ old, black an’ bay, white an’ gray, there’s no distinctions made between us. We’re ground up together under the remorseless teeth o’ the engines of oppression!’

‘Guess his brichin’ must ha’ broke goin’ daown-hill,’ said the Deacon. ‘Slippery road, maybe, an’ the buggy come onter him, an’ he didn’t know ’nough to hold back. That don’t feel like teeth, though. Maybe he busted a shaft, an’ it pricked him.’

‘An’ I come to you from Kansas, wavin’ the tail o’ friendship to all an’ sundry, an’ in the name of the uncounted millions o’ pure-minded high-toned horses now strugglin’ toward the light o’ freedom, I say to you, rub noses with us in our sacred an’ holy cause. The power is yourn. Without you, I say, Man the Oppressor cannot move himself from place to place. Without you he cannot reap, he cannot sow, he cannot plough.’

‘Mighty odd place, Kansas!’ said Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. ‘Seemin’ly they reap in the spring an’

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plough in the fall. 'Guess it's right fer them, but 'twould make me kinder giddy.'

'The produc's of your untirin' industry would rot on the ground if you did not weakly consent to help them. Let 'em rot, I say! Let him call you to the stables in vain an' nevermore! Let him shake his ensnarin' oats under your nose in vain! Let the Brahmas roost in the buggy, an' the rats run riot round the reaper! Let him walk on his two hind feet till they blame well drop off! Win no more soul-destroyin' races for his pleasure! Then, an' not till then, will Man the Oppressor know where he's at. Quit workin', fellow-sufferers an' slaves! Kick! Rear! Plunge! Lie down on the shafts, an' woller! Smash an' destroy! The conflict will be but short, an' the victory is certain. After that we can press our inalienable rights to eight quarts o' oats a day, two good blankets, an' a fly-net an' the best o' stablin'.'

The yellow horse shut his yellow teeth with a triumphant snap; and Tuck said, with a sigh: 'Seems 's if some-thin' ought to be done. Don't seem right, somehow,—oppressin' us an' all,—to my way o' thinkin'.'

Said Muldoon, in a far-away and sleepy voice: 'Who in Vermont's goin' to haul de inalienable oats? Dey weigh like Sam Hill, an' sixty bushel at dat allowance ain't goin' to last t'ree weeks here. An' dere's de winter hay for five mont's!'

'We can settle those minor details when the great cause is won,' said the yellow horse. 'Let us return simply but grandly to our inalienable rights—the right o' freedom on these yere verdant hills, an' no invijjus distinctions o' track an' pedigree.'

'What in stables 'jer call an invijjus distinction?' said the Deacon, stiffly.

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‘Fer one thing, bein’ a bloated, pampered trotter jest because you happen to be raised that way, an’ couldn’t no more help trottin’ than eatin’.’

‘Do ye know anythin’ about trotters?’ said the Deacon.

‘I’ve seen ’em trot. That was enough for me. I don’t want to know any more. Trottin’ ’s immoral.’

‘Waal, I’ll tell you this much. They don’t bloat, an’ they don’t pamp—much. I don’t hold out to be no trotter myself, though I am free to say I had hopes that way—onct. But I do say, fer I’ve seen ’em trained, that a trotter don’t trot with his feet; he trots with his head; an’ he does more work—ef you know what that is—in a week than you er your sire ever done in all your lives. He’s everlastingly at it, a trotter is; an’ when he isn’t, he’s studyin’ haow. You seen ’em trot? Much you hev! You was hitched to a rail, back o’ the stand, in a buckboard with a soap-box nailed on the slats, an’ a frowy buff’lo atop, while your man peddled rum for lemonade to little boys as thought they was actin’ manly, till you was both run off the track and jailed—you intoed, shufflin’, sway-backed, wind-suckin’ skate, you!’

‘Don’t get het up, Deacon,’ said Tweezy, quietly. ‘Now, suh, would you consider a fox-trot, an’ single-foot, an’ rack, an’ pace, an’ amble, distinctions not worth distinguishin’? I assuah you, gentlemen, there was a time befo’ I was afflicted in my hip, if you’ll pardon me, Miss Tuck, when I was quite celebrated in Paduky for all those gaits; an’ in my opinion the Deacon’s co’rect when he says that a ho’s e of any position in society gets his gaits by his haid, an’ not by—his, ah, limbs, Miss Tuck. I reckon I’m very little good now, but I’m rememberin’ the things I used to do befo’ I took to trans-

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po'tin' real estate with the help and assistance of this gentleman here.' He looked at Muldoon.

'Invijjus arterficial hind-legs!' said the ex-car-horse, with a grunt of contempt. 'On de Belt Line we don't reckon no horse wuth his keep 'less he kin switch de car off de track, run her round on de cobbles, an' dump her in ag'in ahead o' de truck what's blockin' him. Dere's a way o' swinging yer quarters when de drivers says, "Yank her out, boys!" dat takes a year to learn. Onct yer git enter it, youse kin yank a cable-car outer a man-hole. I don't advertise myself for no circus-horse, but I knew dat trick better than most, an' dey was good to me in de stables, fer I saved time on de Belt—an' time's what dey hunt in N' York.'

'But the simple child o' nature—' the yellow horse began.

'Oh, go an' unscrew your splints! You're talkin' through yer bandages,' said Muldoon, with a horse-laugh. 'Dere ain't no loose-box for de simple child o' nature on de Belt Line, wid de "Paris" comin' in an' de "Teutonic" goin' out, an' de trucks an' de coupes sayin' things, an' de heavy freight movin' down fer de Boston boat 'bout t'ree o'clock of an August afternoon, in de middle of a hot wave when de fat Kanucks an' Western horses drops dead on de block. De simple child o' nature had better chase himself inter de water. Every man at de end of his lines is mad or loaded or silly, an' de cop's madder an' loadeder an' sillier than de rest. Dey all take it outer de horses. Dere's no wavin' brooks ner ripplin' grass on de Belt Line. Run her out on de cobbles wid de sparks flyin', an' stop when de cop slugs you on de bone o' yer nose. Dat's N' York; see?'

'I was always told s'ciety in Noo York was dreffle

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refined an' high-toned,' said Tuck. 'We're lookin' to go there one o' these days, Nip an' me.'

'Oh, you won't see no Belt business where you'll go, miss. De man dat wants you'll want you bad, an' he'll summer you on Long Island er at Newport, wid a winky-pinky silver harness an' an English coachman. You'll make a star-hitch, you an' yer brother, miss. But I guess you won't have no nice smooth bar bit. Dey checks 'em, an' dey bangs deir tails, an' dey bits 'em, de city folk, an' dey says it's English, ye know, and dey darsen't cut a horse loose 'ca'se o' de cops. N' York's no place fer a horse, 'less he's on de Belt, an' can go round wid de boys. Wisht I was in de Fire Department!'

'But did you never stop to consider the degradin' servitood of it all?' said the yellow horse.

'You don't stop on the Belt, cully. You're stopped. An' we was all in de servitood business, man an' horse, an' Jimmy dat sold de papers. Guess de passengers weren't out to grass neither, by de way dey acted. I done my turn, an' I'm none o' Barnum's crowd; but any horse dat's worked on de Belt four years don't train wid no simple child o' nature—not by de whole length o' N' York.'

'But can it be possible that with your experience, and at your time of life, you do not believe that all horses are free and equal?' said the yellow horse.

'Not till they're dead,' Muldoon answered quietly. 'An' den it depends on de gross total o' buttons an' mucilage dey gits outer youse at Barren Island.'

'They tell me you're a prominent philosopher.' The yellow horse turned to Marcus. 'Can you deny a basic and pivotal statement such as this?'

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'I don't deny anythin',' said Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, cautiously; 'but ef you ast me, I should say 'twuz more different sorts o' clipped oats of a lie than anythin' I've had my teeth into sence I wuz foaled.'

'Are you a horse?' said the yellow horse.

'Them that knows me best 'low I am.'

'Ain't I a horse?'

'Yep; one kind of.'

'Then ain't you an' me equal?'

'How fer kin you go in a day to a loaded buggy, drawin' five hundred pounds?' Marcus asked carelessly.

'That has nothing to do with the case,' the yellow horse answered excitedly.

'There's nothing I know hez more to do with the case,' Marcus replied.

'Kin ye yank a full car outer de tracks ten times in de mornin'?' said Muldoon.

'Kin ye go to Keene—forty-two mile in an afternoon—with a mate,' said Rick, 'an' turn out bright an' early next mornin'?''

'Was there evah any time in your careah, suh—I am not referrin' to the present circumstances, but our mutual glorious past—when you could carry a pretty girl to market hahnsome, an' let her knit all the way on account o' the smoothness o' the motion?' said Tweezy.

'Kin you keep your feet through the West River Bridge, with the narrer-gage comin' in on one side, an' the Montreal flyer the other, an' the old bridge teeterin' between?' said the Deacon. 'Kin you put your nose down on the cow-catcher of a locomotive when you're waitin' at the depot an' let 'em play "Curfew shall not ring to-night" with the big brass bell?'

'Kin you hold back when the brichin' breaks? Kin

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you stop fer orders when your nigh hind leg's over your trace an' ye feel good of a frosty mornin'?" said Nip, who had only learned that trick last winter, and thought it was the crown of horsely knowledge.

'What's the use o' talkin'?' said Tedda Gabler, scornfully. 'What kin ye do?'

'I rely on my simple rights—the inalienable rights o' my unfettered horsehood. An' I am proud to say I have never, since my first shoes, lowered myself to obeyin' the will o' man.'

'Must ha' had a heap o' whips broke over yer yaller back,' said Tedda. 'Hev ye found it paid any?'

'Sorrer has been my portion since the day I was foaled. Blows an' boots an' whips an' insults—injury, outrage, an' oppression. I would not endoor the degradin' badges o' servitood that connect us with the buggy an' the farm-wagon.'

'It's amazin' difficult to draw a buggy 'thout traces er collar er breast-strap er somefin',' said Marcus. 'A Power-machine for sawin' wood is 'most the only thing there's no straps to. I've helped saw's much as three cord in an afternoon in a Power-machine. Slep', too, most o' the time, I did; but 'tain't half as inte-res-tin' ez goin' daown-taown in the Concord.'

'Concord don't hender you goin' to sleep any,' said Nip. 'My throat-lash! D' you remember when you lay down in the sharves last week, waitin' at the piazza?'

'Pshaw! That didn't hurt the sharves. They wuz good an' wide, an' I lay down keerful. The folks kep' me hitched up nigh an hour 'fore they started; an' larfed—why, they all but lay down themselves with larfin'. Say, Boney, if you've got to be hitched to anything

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that goes on wheels, you've got to be hitched with somefin'.'

'Go an' jine a circus,' said Muldoon, 'an' walk on your hind legs. All de horses dat knows too much to work [he pronounced it 'woik,' New York fashion] jine de circus.'

'I am not sayin' anythin' again' work,' said the yellow horse; 'work is the finest thing in the world.'

'Seems too fine fer some of us,' Tedda snorted.

'I only ask that each horse should work for himself, an' enjoy the profit of his labours. Let him work intelligently, an' not as a machine.'

'There ain't no horse that works like a machine,' Marcus began.

'There's no way o' workin' that doesn't mean goin' to pole or single—they never put me in the Power-machine—er under saddle,' said Rick.

'Oh, shucks! We're talkin' same ez we graze,' said Nip, 'raound an' raound in circles. Rod, we hain't heard from you yet, an' you've more knowhow than any span here.'

Rod, the off-horse of the pair, had been standing with one hip lifted, like a tired cow; and you could only tell by the quick flutter of the haw across his eye, from time to time, that he was paying any attention to the argument. He thrust his jaw out sidewise, as his habit is when he pulls, and changed his leg. His voice was hard and heavy, and his ears were close to his big, plain Hambletonian head.

'How old are you?' he said to the yellow horse.

'Nigh thirteen, I guess.'

'Mean age; ugly age; I'm gettin' that way myself. How long hev ye been pawin' this fire-fanged stable litter?'

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'If you mean my principles, I've held 'em since I was three.'

'Mean age; ugly age; teeth give heaps o' trouble then. Set a colt to actin' crazy fer a while. You've kep' it up, seemin'ly. D'ye talk much to your neighbours fer a steady thing?'

'I uphold the principles o' the Cause wherever I am pastured.'

'Done a heap o' good, I guess?'

'I am proud to say I have taught a few of my companions the principles o' freedom an' liberty.'

'Meanin' they ran away er kicked when they got the chanst?'

'I was talkin' in the abstrac', an' not in the concrete. My teachin's educated them.'

'What a horse, specially a young horse, hears in the abstrac', he's liable to do in the Concord. You wuz handled late, I presoom.'

'Four, risin' five.'

'That's where the trouble began. Driv' by a woman, like ez not—eh?'

'Not fer long,' said the yellow horse, with a snap of his teeth.

'Spilled her?'

'I heerd she never drove again.'

'Any children?'

'Buckboards full of 'em.'

'Men too?'

'I have shed consid'ble men in my time.'

'By kickin'?''

'Any way that come along. Fallin' back over the dash is as handy as most.'

'They must be turr'ble afraid o' you daown-taown?'

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'They've sent me here to get rid o' me. I guess they spend their time talkin' over my campaigns.'

'I wanter know!'

'Yes, sir. Now, all you gentlemen have asked me what I can do. I'll just show you. See them two fellers lyin' down by the buggy?'

'Yep; one of 'em owns me. T'other broke me,' said Rod.

'Get 'em out here in the open, an' I'll show you something. Lemme hide back o' you peoples, so's they won't see what I'm at.'

'Meanin' ter kill 'em?' Rod drawled. There was a shudder of horror through the others; but the yellow horse never noticed.

'I'll catch 'em by the back o' the neck, an' pile-drive 'em a piece. They can suit 'emselves about livin' when I'm through with 'em.'

'Shouldn't wonder ef they did,' said Rod.

The yellow horse had hidden himself very cleverly behind the others as they stood in a group, and was swaying his head close to the ground with a curious scythe-like motion, looking sideways out of his wicked eyes. You can never mistake a man-eater getting ready to knock a man down. We had had one to pasture the year before.

'See that?' said my companion, turning over on the pine-needles. 'Nice for a woman walking 'cross lots, wouldn't it be?'

'Bring 'em out!' said the yellow horse, hunching his sharp back. 'There's no chance among them tall trees. Bring out the—oh! Ouch!'

It was a right-and-left kick from Muldoon. I had no idea that the old car-horse could lift so quickly. Both

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blows caught the yellow horse full and fair in the ribs, and knocked the breath out of him.

‘What’s that for?’ he said angrily, when he recovered himself; but I noticed he did not draw any nearer to Muldoon than was necessary.

Muldoon never answered, but discoursed to himself in the whining grunt that he uses when he is going downhill in front of a heavy load. We call it singing; but I think it’s something much worse, really. The yellow horse blustered and squealed a little, and at last said that, if it was a horse-fly that had stung Muldoon, he would accept an apology.

‘You’ll get it,’ said Muldoon, ‘in de sweet by-and-by—all de apology you’ve any use for. Excuse me interruptin’ you, Mr. Rod, but I’m like Tweezy—I’ve a Southern drawback in me hind legs.’

‘Naow, I want you all here to take notice, and you’ll learn something,’ Rod went on. ‘This yaller-backed skate comes to our pastur’—’

‘Not havin’ paid his board,’ put in Tedda.

‘Not havin’ earned his board, an’ talks smooth to us abaout ripplin’ brooks an’ wavin’ grass, an’ his high-toned, pure-souled horsehood, which don’t hender him sheddin’ women an’ children, an’ fallin’ over the dash onter men. You heard his talk, an’ you thought it mighty fine, some o’ you.’

Tuck looked guilty here, but she did not say anything.

‘Bit by bit he goes on ez you have heard.’

‘I was talkin’ in the abstrac’,’ said the yellow horse, in an altered voice.

‘Abstrac’ be switched! Ez I’ve said, it’s this yer blamed abstrac’ business that makes the young uns cut up in the Concord; an’ abstrac’ or no abstrac’, he crep’

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on an' on till he comes to killin' plain an' straight—killin' them as never done him no harm, jest beca'se they owned horses.'

'An' knowed how to manage 'em,' said Tedda. 'That makes it worse.'

'Waal, he didn't kill 'em, anyway,' said Marcus. 'He'd ha' been half killed if he had tried.'

'Makes no differ,' Rod answered. 'He meant to; an' ef he hadn't—s'pose we want the Back Pasture turned into a biffin'-ground on our only day er rest? 'S'pose we want our men walkin' round with bits er lead pipe an' a twitch, an' their hands full o' stones to throw at us, same's if we wuz hogs er hooky keows? More'n that, leavin' out Tedda here—an' I guess it's more her maouth than her manners stands in her light—there ain't a horse on this farm that ain't a woman's horse, an' proud of it. An' this yer bog-spavined Kansas sunflower goes up an' daown the length o' the country, traded off and traded on, boastin' as he's shed women—an' children. I don't say as a woman in a buggy ain't a fool. I don't say as she ain't the lastin'est kind er fool, ner I don't say a child ain't worse—spattin' the lines an' standin' up an' hollerin'—but I do say, 'tain't none of our business to shed 'em daown the road.'

'We don't,' said the Deacon. 'The baby tried to git some o' my tail for a sooveneer last fall when I was up to the haouse, an' I didn't kick. Boney's talk ain't goin' to hurt us any. We ain't colts.'

'Thet's what you think. Bimeby you git into a tight corner, 'Lection day er Valley Fair, like's not, daown-taown, when you're all het an' lathery, an' pestered with flies, an' thirsty, an' sick o' bein' worked in an' aout 'tween buggies. Then somethin' whispers

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inside o' yer winkers, bringin' up all that talk abaout servitood an' inalienable truck an' sech like, an' jest then a Militia gun goes off, er your wheels hit, an'—waal, you're only another horse ez can't be trusted! I've been there time an' again. Boys—fer I've seen you all bought er broke—on my solemn repitation fer a three-minute clip, I ain't givin' you no bran-mash o' my own fixin'. I'm tellin' you my experiences, an' I've had ez heavy a load an' ez high a check's any horse here. I wuz born with a splint on my near fore ez big's a walnut, an' the cussed, three-cornered Hambletonian temper that sours up an' curdles daown ez you git older. I've favoured my splint; even little Rick he don't know what it's cost me to keep my end up sometimes; an' I've fit my temper in stall an' harness, hitched up an' at pasture, till the sweat trickled off my hoofs, an' they thought I wuz off condition, an' drenched me.'

'When my affliction came,' said Tweezy, gently, 'I was very near to losin' my manners. Allow me to extend to you my sympathy, suh.'

Rick said nothing, but he looked at Rod curiously. Rick is a sunny-tempered child who never bears malice, and I don't think he quite understood. He gets his temper from his mother, as a horse should.

'I've been there too, Rod,' said Tedda. 'Open confession's good for the soul, an' all Monroe County knows I've had my experiences.'

'But if you will excuse me, suh, that pusson'—Tweezy looked unspeakable things at the yellow horse—'that pusson who has insulted our intelligences comes from Kansas. An' what a ho'se of his position, an' Kansas at that, says cannot, by any stretch of the halter, concern gentlemen of our position. There's no shadow of

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equal'ty, suh, not even for one kick. He's beneath our contempt.'

'Let him talk,' said Marcus. 'It's always inte-res-tin' to know what another horse thinks. It don't tech us.'

'An' he talks so, too,' said Tuck. 'I've never heard anythin' so smart for a long time.'

Again Rod stuck out his jaws sidewise, and went on slowly as though he were slugging on a plain bit at the end of a thirty-mile drive:

'I want you all here ter understand thet ther ain't no Kansas, ner no Kentucky, ner yet no Vermont, in our business. There's jest two kind o' horse in the United States—they ez can an' will do their work after bein' properly broke an' handled, an' them as won't. I'm sick an' tired o' this everlastin' tail-switchin' an' wicker-in' abaout one State er another. A horse kin be proud o' his State, an' swap lies abaout it in stall or when he's hitched to a block, ef he keers to put in fly-time that way; but he hain't no right to let that pride o' hisn interfere with his work, ner to make it an excuse fer claimin' he's different. That's colt's talk, an' don't you fergit it, Tweezy. An', Marcus, you remember that bein' a philosopher, an' anxious to save trouble,—fer you are—don't excuse you from jumpin' with all your feet on a slack-jawed, crazy clay-bank like Boney here. It's leavin' 'em alone that gives 'em their chance to ruin colts an' kill folks. An', Tuck, waal, you're a mare anyways—but when a horse comes along an' covers up all his talk o' killin' with ripplin' brooks, an' wavin' grass, an' eight quarts of oats a day free, after killin' his man, don't you be run away with by his yap. You're too young an' too nervous.'

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'I'll—I'll have nervous prostration sure ef there's a fight here,' said Tuck, who saw what was in Rod's eye; 'I'm—I'm that sympathetic I'd run away clear to next caounty.'

'Yep; I know that kind o' sympathy. Jest lasts long enough to start a fuss, an' then lights aout to make new trouble. I hain't been ten years in harness fer nuthin'. Naow, we're goin' to keep school with Boney fer a spell.'

'Say, look a-here, you ain't goin' to hurt me, are you? Remember, I belong to a man in town,' cried the yellow horse, uneasily. Muldoon kept behind him so that he could not run away.

'I know it. There must be some pore deloaded fool in this State hez a right to the loose end o' your hitchin'-strap. I'm blame sorry fer him, but he shall hev his rights when we're through with you,' said Rod.

'If it's all the same, gentlemen, I'd ruther change pasture. Guess I'll do it now.'

'Can't always have your 'druthers. Guess you won't,' said Rod.

'But look a-here. All of you ain't so blame unfriendly to a stranger. S'pose we count noses.'

'What in Vermont fer?' said Rod, putting up his eyebrows. The idea of settling a question by counting noses is the very last thing that ever enters the head of a well-broken horse.

'To see how many's on my side. Here's Miss Tuck, anyway; an' Colonel Tweezy yonder's neutral; an' Judge Marcus, an' I guess the Reverend [the yellow horse meant the Deacon] might see that I had my rights. He's the likeliest-lookin' trotter I've ever set eyes on. Pshaw, boys! You ain't goin' to pound me, be you? Why, we've gone round in pasture, all colts together,

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this month o' Sundays, hain't we, as friendly as could be. There ain't a horse alive—I don't care who he is—has a higher opinion o' you, Mr. Rod, than I have. Let's do it fair an' true an' above the exe. Let's count noses same's they do in Kansas.' Here he dropped his voice a little and turned to Marcus: 'Say, Judge, there's some green food I know, back o' the brook, no one hain't touched yet. After this little fracas is fixed up, you an' me'll make up a party an' 'tend to it.'

Marcus did not answer for a long time, then he said: 'There's a pup up to the haouse 'bout eight weeks old. He'll yap till he gits a lickin', an' when he sees it comin' he lies on his back an' yowls. But he don't go through no cir-kit-uous nose-counting first. I've seen a noo light sence Rod spoke. You'll better stand up to what's served. I'm goin' to philosophise all over your carcass.'

'I'm goin' to do yer up in brown paper,' said Muldoon. 'I can fit you on apologies.'

'Hold on. Ef we all biffed you now, these same men you've been so dead anxious to kill 'u'd call us off. Guess we'll wait till they go back to the haouse, an' you'll have time to think cool an' quiet,' said Rod.

'Have you no respec' whatever fer the dignity o' our common horsehood?' the yellow horse squealed.

'Nary respec' onless the horse kin do something. America's paved with the kind er horse you are—jist plain yaller-dog horse—waitin' ter be whipped inter shape. We call 'em yearlings an' colts when they're young. When they're aged we pound 'em—in this pastur'. Horse, sonny, is what you start from. We know all about horse here, an' he ain't any high-toned, pure-souled child o' nature. Horse, plain horse, same ez you, is chock-full o' tricks, an' meannesses, an' cussed-

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nesses, an' shirkin's, an' monkey-shines, which he's took over from his sire an' his dam, an' thickened up with his own special fancy in the way o' goin' crooked. Thet's horse, an' thet's about his dignity an' the size of his soul 'fore he's been broke an' raw-hided a piece. Now we ain't goin' to give ornery unswitched horse, that hain't done nawthin' wuth a quart of oats sence he wuz foaled, pet names that would be good enough fer Nancy Hanks, or Alix, or Directum, who hev. Don't you try to back off acrost them rocks. Wait where you are! Ef I let my Hambletonian temper git the better o' me I'd frazzle you out finer than rye-straw inside o' three minutes, you woman-scarin', kid-killin', dash-breakin', unbroke, unshod, ungaited, pastur'-hoggin', saw-backed, shark-mouthed, hair-trunk-thrown-in-with-a-trade son of a bronco an' a sewin'-machine!

'I think we'd better get home,' I said to my companion when Rod had finished; and we climbed into the coupe, Tedda whinnying, as we bumped over the ledges: 'Well, I'm dreffle sorry I can't stay fer the sociable; but I hope an' trust my friends'll take a ticket fer me.'

'Bet your natchul!' said Muldoon, cheerfully, and the horses scattered before us, trotting into the ravine.

Next morning we sent back to the livery-stable what was left of the yellow horse. It seemed tired, but anxious to go.

THE SHIP THAT FOUND HERSELF

(1895)

We now, held in captivity,
Spring to our labour nor grieve!
See now, how it is blesseder,
Brothers, to give than receive!
Keep trust, wherefore ye were made,
Paying the duty ye owe;
For a clean thrust and the sheer of the blade
Shall carry us where we should go.
‘Song of the Engines.’

IT was her first voyage, and though she was but a cargo-steamer of twelve hundred tons, she was the very best of her kind, the outcome of forty years of experiments and improvements in framework and machinery; and her designers and owner thought as much of her as though she had been the ‘Lucania.’ Any one can make a floating hotel that will pay expenses, if he puts enough money into the saloon, and charges for private baths, suites of rooms, and such like; but in these days of competition and low freights every square inch of a cargo-boat must be built for cheapness, great hold-capacity, and a certain steady speed. This boat was, perhaps, two hundred and forty feet long and thirty-two feet wide, with arrangements that enabled

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her to carry cattle on her main and sheep on her upper deck if she wanted to; but her great glory was the amount of cargo that she could store away in her holds. Her owners—they were a very well known Scotch firm—came round with her from the north, where she had been launched and christened and fitted, to Liverpool, where she was to take cargo for New York; and the owner's daughter, Miss Frazier, went to and fro on the clean decks, admiring the new paint and the brass work, and the patent winches, and particularly the strong, straight bow, over which she had cracked a bottle of champagne when she named the steamer the 'Dimbula.' It was a beautiful September afternoon, and the boat in all her newness—she was painted lead-colour with a red funnel—looked very fine indeed. Her house-flag was flying, and her whistle from time to time acknowledged the salutes of friendly boats, who saw that she was new to the High and Narrow Seas and wished to make her welcome.

'And now,' said Miss Frazier delightedly, to the captain, 'she's a real ship, isn't she? It seems only the other day father gave the order for her, and now—and now—isn't she a beauty!' The girl was proud of the firm, and talked as though she were the controlling partner.

'Oh, she's no so bad,' the skipper replied cautiously. 'But I'm sayin' that it takes more than christenin' to mak' a ship. In the nature o' things, Miss Frazier, if ye follow me, she's just irons and rivets and plates put into the form of a ship. She has to find herself yet.'

'I thought father said she was exceptionally well found.'

'So she is,' said the skipper, with a laugh. 'But it's

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this way wi' ships, Miss Frazier. She's all here, but the parrts of her have not learned to work together yet. They've had no chance.'

'The engines are working beautifully. I can hear them.'

'Yes, indeed. But there's more than engines to a ship. Every inch of her, ye'll understand, has to be livened up and made to work wi' its neighbour—sweetenin' her, we call it, technically.'

'And how will you do it?' the girl asked.

'We can no more than drive and steer her, and so forth; but if we have rough weather this trip—it's likely—she'll learn the rest by heart! For a ship, ye'll ob-sairve, Miss Frazier, is in no sense a reegid body closed at both ends. She's a highly complex structure o' various an' conflictin' strains, wi' tissues that must give an' tak' accordin' to her personal modulus of elastecity.' Mr. Buchanan, the chief engineer, was coming towards them. 'I'm sayin' to Miss Frazier, here, that our little "Dim-bula" has to be sweetened yet, and nothin' but a gale will do it. How's all wi' your engines, Buck?'

'Well enough—true by plumb an' rule, o' course; but there's no spontaneeity yet.' He turned to the girl. 'Take my word, Miss Frazier, and maybe ye'll comprehend later; even after a pretty girl's christened a ship it does not follow that there's such a thing as a ship under the men that work her.'

'I was sayin' the very same, Mr. Buchanan,' the skipper interrupted.

'That's more metaphysical than I can follow,' said Miss Frazier, laughing.

'Why so? Ye're good Scotch, an'—I knew your mother's father, he was fra' Dumfries—ye've a vested

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right in metaphysics, Miss Frazier, just as ye have in the "Dimbula,"' the engineer said.

'Eh, well, we must go down to the deep watters, an' earn Miss Frazier her deevideends. Will you not come to my cabin for tea?' said the skipper. 'We'll be in dock the night, and when you're goin' back to Glasgie ye can think of us loadin' her down an' drivin' her forth—all for your sake.'

In the next few days they stowed some two thousand tons' dead weight into the 'Dimbula,' and took her out from Liverpool. As soon as she met the lift of the open water, she naturally began to talk. If you lay your ear to the side of the cabin the next time you are in a steamer, you will hear hundreds of little voices in every direction, thrilling and buzzing, and whispering and popping, and gurgling and sobbing and squeaking exactly like a telephone in a thunder-storm. Wooden ships shriek and growl and grunt, but iron vessels throb and quiver through all their hundreds of ribs and thousands of rivets. The 'Dimbula' was very strongly built, and every piece of her had a letter or number, or both, to describe it; and every piece had been hammered, or forged, or rolled, or punched by man, and had lived in the roar and rattle of the ship-yard for months. Therefore, every piece had its own separate voice in exact proportion to the amount of trouble spent upon it. Cast-iron, as a rule, says very little; but mild steel plates and wrought-iron, and rib and beams that have been much bent and welded and riveted, talk continuously. Their conversation, of course, is not half as wise as our human talk, because they are all, though they do not know it, bound down one to the other in a black darkness, where they cannot tell what is happening near them, nor what will overtake them next.

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As soon as she had cleared the Irish coast a sullen, gray-headed old wave of the Atlantic climbed leisurely over her straight bow, and sat down on her steam-capstan used for hauling up the anchor. Now the capstan and the engine that drove it had been newly painted red and green; besides which, nobody likes being ducked.

'Don't you do that again,' the capstan sputtered through the teeth of his cogs. 'Hi! Where's the fellow gone?'

The wave had slouched overside with a plop and a chuckle; but 'Plenty more where he came from,' said a brother-wave, and went through and over the capstan, who was bolted firmly to an iron plate on the iron deck-beams below.

'Can't you keep still up there?' said the deck-beams. 'What's the matter with you? One minute you weigh twice as much as you ought to, and the next you don't!'

'It isn't my fault,' said the capstan. 'There's a green brute outside that comes and hits me on the head.'

'Tell that to the shipwrights. You've been in position for months and you've never wriggled like this before. If you aren't careful you'll strain us.'

'Talking of strain,' said a low, rasping, unpleasant voice, 'are any of you fellows—you deck-beams, we mean—aware that those exceedingly ugly knees of yours happen to be riveted into our structure—ours?'

'Who might you be?' the deck-beams inquired.

'Oh, nobody in particular,' was the answer. 'We're only the port and starboard upper-deck stringers; and if you persist in heaving and hiking like this, we shall be reluctantly compelled to take steps.'

Now the stringers of the ship are long iron girders, so to speak, that run lengthways from stern to bow. They

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keep the iron frames (what are called ribs in a wooden ship) in place, and also help to hold the ends of the deck-beams, which go from side to side of the ship. Stringers always consider themselves most important, because they are so long.

‘You will take steps—will you?’ This was a long echoing rumble. It came from the frames—scores and scores of them, each one about eighteen inches distant from the next, and each riveted to the stringers in four places. ‘We think you will have a certain amount of trouble in that’; and thousands and thousands of little rivets that held everything together whispered: ‘You will. You will! Stop quivering and be quiet. Hold on, brethren! Hold on! Hot Punches! What’s that?’

Rivets have no teeth, so they cannot chatter with fright; but they did their best as a fluttering jar swept along the ship from stern to bow, and she shook like a rat in a terrier’s mouth.

An unusually severe pitch, for the sea was rising, had lifted the big throbbing screw nearly to the surface, and it was spinning round in a kind of soda-water—half sea and half air—going much faster than was proper, because there was no deep water for it to work in. As it sank again, the engines—and they were triple expansion, three cylinders in a row—snorted through all their three pistons. ‘Was that a joke, you fellow outside? It’s an uncommonly poor one. How are we to do our work if you fly off the handle that way?’

‘I didn’t fly off the handle,’ said the screw, twirling huskily at the end of the screw-shaft. ‘If I had, you’d have been scrap-iron by this time. The sea dropped away from under me, and I had nothing to catch on to. That’s all.’

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'That's all, d'you call it?' said the thrust-block, whose business it is to take the push of the screw; for if a screw had nothing to hold it back it would crawl right into the engine-room. (It is the holding back of the screwing action that gives the drive to a ship.) 'I know I do my work deep down and out of sight, but I warn you I expect justice. All I ask for is bare justice. Why can't you push steadily and evenly, instead of whizzing like a whirligig, and making me hot under all my collars.' The thrust-block had six collars, each faced with brass, and he did not wish to get them heated.

All the bearings that supported the fifty feet of screw-shaft as it ran to the stern whispered: 'Justice—give us justice.'

'I can only give you what I can get,' the screw answered. 'Look out! It's coming again!'

He rose with a roar as the 'Dimbula' plunged, and 'whack—flack—whack—whack' went the engines, furiously, for they had little to check them.

'I'm the noblest outcome of human ingenuity—Mr. Buchanan says so,' squealed the high-pressure cylinder. 'This is simply ridiculous!' The piston went up savagely, and choked, for half the steam behind it was mixed with dirty water. 'Help! Oiler! Fitter! Stoker! Help! I'm choking,' it gasped. 'Never in the history of maritime invention has such a calamity overtaken one so young and strong. And if I go, who's to drive the ship?'

'Hush! oh, hush!' whispered the Steam, who, of course, had been to sea many times before. He used to spend his leisure ashore in a cloud, or a gutter, or a flower-pot, or a thunder-storm, or anywhere else where water was needed. 'That's only a little priming, a little

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carrying-over, as they call it. It'll happen all night, on and off. I don't say it's nice, but it's the best we can do under the circumstances.'

'What difference can circumstances make? I'm here to do my work—on clean, dry steam. Blow circumstances!' the cylinder roared.

'The circumstances will attend to the blowing. I've worked on the North Atlantic run a good many times—it's going to be rough before morning.'

'It isn't distressingly calm now,' said the extra-strong frames—they were called web-frames—in the engine-room. 'There's an upward thrust that we don't understand, and there's a twist that is very bad for our brackets and diamond-plates, and there's a sort of west-north-westerly pull that follows the twist, which seriously annoys us. We mention this because we happened to cost a good deal of money, and we feel sure that the owner would not approve of our being treated in this frivolous way.'

'I'm afraid the matter is out of the owner's hands for the present,' said the Steam, slipping into the condenser. 'You're left to your own devices till the weather betters.'

'I wouldn't mind the weather,' said a flat bass voice below; 'it's this confounded cargo that's breaking my heart. I'm the garboard-strake, and I'm twice as thick as most of the others, and I ought to know something.'

The garboard-strake is the lowest plate in the bottom of a ship, and the 'Dimbula's' garboard-strake was nearly three-quarters of an inch mild steel.

'The sea pushes me up in a way I should never have expected,' the strake grunted, 'and the cargo pushes me down, and, between the two, I don't know what I'm supposed to do.'

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‘When in doubt, hold on,’ rumbled the Steam, making head in the boilers.

‘Yes; but there’s only dark, and cold, and hurry, down here; and how do I know whether the other plates are doing their duty? Those bulwark-plates up above, I’ve heard, ain’t more than five-sixteenths of an inch thick—scandalous, I call it.’

‘I agree with you,’ said a huge web-frame by the main cargo-hatch. He was deeper and thicker than all the others, and curved half-way across the ship in the shape of half an arch, to support the deck where deck-beams would have been in the way of cargo coming up and down. ‘I work entirely unsupported, and I observe that I am the sole strength of this vessel, so far as my vision extends. The responsibility, I assure you, is enormous. I believe the money-value of the cargo is over one hundred and fifty thousand pounds. Think of that!’

‘And every pound of it is dependent on my personal exertions.’ Here spoke a sea-valve that communicated directly with the water outside, and was seated not very far from the garboard-strake. ‘I rejoice to think that I am a Prince-Hyde Valve, with best Para rubber facings. Five patents cover me—I mention this without pride—five separate and several patents, each one finer than the other. At present I am screwed fast. Should I open, you would immediately be swamped. This is incontrovertible!’

Patent things always use the longest words they can. It is a trick that they pick up from their inventors.

‘That’s news,’ said a big centrifugal bilge-pump. ‘I had an idea that you were employed to clean decks and things with. At least, I’ve used you for that more than

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once. I forget the precise number, in thousands, of gallons which I am guaranteed to throw per hour; but I assure you, my complaining friends, that there is not the least danger. I alone am capable of clearing any water that may find its way here. By my Biggest Deliveries, we pitched then!’

The sea was getting up in a workmanlike style. It was a dead westerly gale, blown from under a ragged opening of green sky, narrowed on all sides by fat, gray clouds; and the wind bit like pincers as it fretted the spray into lacework on the flanks of the waves.

‘I tell you what it is,’ the foremast telephoned down its wire-stays. ‘I’m up here, and I can take a dispassionate view of things. There’s an organised conspiracy against us. I’m sure of it, because every single one of these waves is heading directly for our bows. The whole sea is concerned in it—and so’s the wind. It’s awful!’

‘What’s awful?’ said a wave, drowning the capstan for the hundredth time.

‘This organised conspiracy on your part,’ the capstan gurgled, taking his cue from the mast.

‘Organised bubbles and spindrift! There has been a depression in the Gulf of Mexico. Excuse me!’ He leaped overside; but his friends took up the tale one after another.

‘Which has advanced—’ That wave hove green water over the funnel.

‘As far as Cape Hatteras—’ He drenched the bridge.

‘And is now going out to sea—to sea—to sea!’ The third wave went free in three surges, making a clean sweep of a boat, which turned bottom up and sank in the darkening troughs alongside, while the broken falls whipped the davits.

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'That's all there is to it,' seethed the white water roaring through the scuppers. 'There's no animus in our proceedings. We're only meteorological corollaries.'

'Is it going to get any worse?' said the bow-anchor chained down to the deck, where he could only breathe once in five minutes.

'Not knowing, can't say. Wind may blow a bit by midnight. Thanks awfully. Good-bye.'

The wave that spoke so politely had travelled some distance aft, and found itself all mixed up on the deck amidships, which was a well-deck sunk between high bulwarks. One of the bulwark plates, which was hung on hinges to open outward, had swung out, and passed the bulk of the water back to the sea again with a clean smack.

'Evidently that's what I'm made for,' said the plate, closing again with a sputter of pride. 'Oh no, you don't, my friend!'

The top of a wave was trying to get in from the outside, but as the plate did not open in that direction, the defeated water spurted back.

'Not bad for five-sixteenths of an inch,' said the bulwark-plate. 'My work, I see, is laid down for the night'; and it began opening and shutting with the motion of the ship as it was designed to do.

'We are not what you might call idle,' groaned all the frames together, as the 'Dimbula' climbed a big wave, lay on her side at the top, and shot into the next hollow, twisting in the descent. A huge swell pushed up exactly under her middle, and her bow and stern hung free with nothing to support them. Then one joking wave caught her up at the bow, and another at the stern, while the rest of the water slunk away from under her just to see how she would like it; so she was held up at

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her two ends only, and the weight of the cargo and the machinery fell on the groaning iron keels and bilge-stringers.

‘Ease off! Ease off, there!’ roared the garboard-strake. ‘I want one-eighth of an inch fair play. D’you hear me, you rivets!’

‘Ease off! Ease off!’ cried the bilge-stringers. ‘Don’t hold us so tight to the frames!’

‘Ease off!’ grunted the deck-beams, as the ‘Dimbula’ rolled fearfully. ‘You’ve cramped our knees into the stringers, and we can’t move. Ease off, you flat-headed little nuisances.’

Then two converging seas hit the bows, one on each side, and fell away in torrents of streaming thunder.

‘Ease off!’ shouted the forward collision-bulkhead. ‘I want to crumple up, but I’m stiffened in every direction. Ease off, you dirty little forge-filings. Let me breathe!’

All the hundreds of plates that are riveted to the frames, and make the outside skin of every steamer, echoed the call, for each plate wanted to shift and creep a little, and each plate, according to its position, complained against the rivets.

‘We can’t help it! We can’t help it!’ they murmured in reply. ‘We’re put here to hold you, and we’re going to do it; you never pull us twice in the same direction. If you’d say what you were going to do next, we’d try to meet your views.’

‘As far as I could feel,’ said the upper-deck planking, and that was four inches thick, ‘every single iron near me was pushing or pulling in opposite directions. Now, what’s the sense of that? My friends, let us all pull together.’

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'Pull any way you please,' roared the funnel, 'so long as you don't try your experiments on me. I need seven wire ropes, all pulling in different directions, to hold me steady. Isn't that so?'

'We believe you, my boy!' whistled the funnel-stays through their clinched teeth, as they twanged in the wind from the top of the funnel to the deck.

'Nonsense! We must all pull together,' the decks repeated. 'Pull lengthways.'

'Very good,' said the stringers; 'then stop pushing sideways when you get wet. Be content to run gracefully fore and aft, and curve in at the ends as we do.'

'No—no curves at the end! A very slight workman-like curve from side to side, with a good grip at each knee, and little pieces welded on,' said the deck-beams.

'Fiddle!' cried the iron pillars of the deep, dark hold. 'Who ever heard of curves? Stand up straight; be a perfectly round column, and carry tons of good solid weight—like that! There!' A big sea smashed on the deck above, and the pillars stiffened themselves to the load.

'Straight up and down is not bad,' said the frames, who ran that way in the sides of the ship, 'but you must also expand yourselves sideways. Expansion is the law of life, children. Open out! open out!'

'Come back!' said the deck-beams savagely, as the upward heave of the sea made the frames try to open. 'Come back to your bearings, you slack-jawed irons!'

'Rigidity! Rigidity! Rigidity!' thumped the engines. 'Absolute, unvarying rigidity—rigidity!'

'You see!' whined the rivets in chorus. 'No two of you will ever pull alike, and—and you blame it all on us. We only know how to go through a plate and bite down

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on both sides so that it can't, and mustn't, and shan't move.'

'I've got one-fraction of an inch play, at any rate,' said the garboard-strake, triumphantly. So he had, and all the bottom of the ship felt the easier for it.

'Then we're no good,' sobbed the bottom rivets. 'We were ordered—we were ordered—never to give; and we've given, and the sea will come in, and we'll all go to the bottom together! First we're blamed for everything unpleasant, and now we haven't the consolation of having done our work.'

'Don't say I told you,' whispered the Steam consolingly; 'but, between you and me and the last cloud I came from, it was bound to happen sooner or later. You had to give a fraction, and you've given without knowing it. Now, hold on, as before.'

'What's the use?' a few hundred rivets chattered. 'We've given—we've given; and the sooner we confess that we can't keep the ship together, and go off our little heads, the easier it will be. No rivet forged can stand this strain.'

'No one rivet was ever meant to. Share it among you,' the Steam answered.

'The others can have my share. I'm going to pull out,' said a rivet in one of the forward plates.

'If you go, others will follow,' hissed the Steam. 'There's nothing so contagious in a boat as rivets going. Why, I knew a little chap like you—he was an eighth of an inch fatter, though—on a steamer—to be sure, she was only nine hundred tons, now I come to think of it—in exactly the same place as you are. He pulled out in a bit of a bobble of a sea, not half as bad as this, and he started all his friends on the same butt-strap, and the

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plates opened like a furnace door, and I had to climb into the nearest fog-bank, while the boat went down.'

'Now that's peculiarly disgraceful,' said the rivet. 'Fatter than me, was he, and in a steamer half our tonnage? Reedy little peg! I blush for the family, sir.' He settled himself more firmly than ever in his place, and the Steam chuckled.

'You see,' he went on, quite gravely, 'a rivet, and especially a rivet in your position, is really the one indispensable part of the ship.'

The Steam did not say that he had whispered the very same thing to every single piece of iron aboard. There is no sense in telling too much truth.

And all that while the little 'Dimbula' pitched and chopped, and swung and slewed, and lay down as though she were going to die, and got up as though she had been stung, and threw her nose round and round in circles half a dozen times as she dipped; for the gale was at its worst. It was inky black, in spite of the tearing white froth on the waves, and, to top everything, the rain began to fall in sheets, so that you could not see your hand before your face. This did not make much difference to the ironwork below, but it troubled the foremast a good deal.

'Now it's all finished,' he said dismally. 'The conspiracy is too strong for us. There is nothing left but to—'

'Hurraar! Brrrrraah! Brrrrrrp!' roared the Steam through the fog-horn, till the decks quivered. 'Don't be frightened, below. It's only me, just throwing out a few words, in case any one happens to be rolling round to-night.'

'You don't mean to say there's any one except us on

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the sea in such weather?' said the funnel in a husky snuffle.

'Scores of 'em,' said the Steam, clearing its throat; 'Rrrrrraaa! Brraaaaa! Prrrrp! It's a trifle windy up here and, Great Boilers! how it rains!'

'We're drowning,' said the scuppers. They had been doing nothing else all night, but this steady thrash of rain above them seemed to be the end of the world.

'That's all right. We'll be easier in an hour or two. First the wind and then the rain: Soon you may make sail again! Grrraaaaaah! Drrrraaaa! Drrrp! I have a notion that the sea is going down already. If it does you'll learn something about rolling. We've only pitched till now. By the way, aren't you chaps in the hold a little easier than you were?'

There was just as much groaning and straining as ever, but it was not so loud or squeaky in tone; and when the ship quivered she did not jar stiffly, like a poker hit on the floor, but gave with a supple little waggle, like a perfectly balanced golf-club.

'We have made a most amazing discovery,' said the stringers, one after another. 'A discovery that entirely changes the situation. We have found, for the first time in the history of shipbuilding, that the inward pull of the deck-beams and the outward thrust of the frames lock us, as it were, more closely in our places, and enables us to endure a strain which is entirely without parallel in the records of marine architecture.'

The Steam turned a laugh quickly into a roar up the fog-horn. 'What massive intellects you great stringers have,' he said softly, when he had finished.

'We also,' began the deck-beams, 'are discoverers and geniuses. We are of opinion that the support of the

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hold-pillars materially helps us. We find that we lock up on them when we are subjected to a heavy and singular weight of sea above.'

Here the 'Dimbula' shot down a hollow, lying almost on her side—righting at the bottom with a wrench and a spasm.

'In these cases—are you aware of this, Steam?—the plating at the bows, and particularly at the stern—we would also mention the floors beneath us—help us to resist any tendency to spring.' The frames spoke in the solemn, awed voice which people use when they have just come across something entirely new for the very first time.

'I'm only a poor puffy little flutterer,' said the Steam, 'but I have to stand a good deal of pressure in my business. It's all tremendously interesting. Tell us some more. You fellows are so strong.'

'Watch us and you'll see,' said the bow-plates, proudly. 'Ready, behind there! Here's the Father and Mother of Waves coming! Sit tight, rivets all!' A great sluicing comber thundered by, but through the scuffle and confusion the Steam could hear the low, quick cries of the ironwork as the various strains took them—cries like these: 'Easy, now—easy! Now push for all your strength! Hold out! Give a fraction! Hold up! Pull in! Shove crossways! Mind the strain at the ends! Grip, now! Bite tight! Let the water get away from under—and there she goes!'

The wave raced off into the darkness, shouting, 'Not bad, that, if it's your first run!' and the drenched and ducked ship throbbed to the beat of the engines inside her. All three cylinders were white with the salt spray that had come down through the engine-room hatch;

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there was white fur on the canvas-bound steam-pipes, and even the bright-work deep below was speckled and soiled; but the cylinders had learned to make the most of steam that was half water, and were pounding along cheerfully.

‘How’s the noblest outcome of human ingenuity hitting it?’ said the Steam, as he whirled through the engine-room.

‘Nothing for nothing in this world of woë,’ the cylinders answered, as though they had been working for centuries, ‘and precious little for seventy-five pounds’ head. We’ve made two knots this last hour and a quarter! Rather humiliating for eight hundred horsepower, isn’t it?’

‘Well, it’s better than drifting astern, at any rate. You seem rather less—how shall I put it?—stiff in the back than you were.’

‘If you’d been hammered as we’ve been this night, you wouldn’t be stiff—iff—iff, either. Theoreti—retti—retti—cally, of course, rigidity is the thing. Purr—purr—practically, there has to be a little give and take. We found that out by working on our sides for five minutes at a stretch—chch—chh. How’s the weather?’

‘Sea’s going down fast,’ said the Steam.

‘Good business,’ said the high-pressure cylinder. ‘Whack her up, boys. They’ve given us five pounds more steam’; and he began humming the first bars of ‘Said the young Obadiah to the old Obadiah,’ which, as you may have noticed, is a pet tune among engines not built for high speed. Racing-liners with twin-screws sing ‘The Turkish Patrol’ and the overture to ‘The Bronze Horse,’ and ‘Madame Angot,’ till something goes wrong, and then they render Gounod’s ‘Funeral March of a Marionette,’ with variations.

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'You'll learn a song of your own some fine day,' said the Steam, as he flew up the fog-horn for one last bellow.

Next day the sky cleared and the sea dropped a little, and the 'Dimbula' began to roll from side to side till every inch of iron in her was sick and giddy. But luckily they did not all feel ill at the same time: otherwise she would have opened out like a wet paper box.

The Steam whistled warnings as he went about his business: it is in this short, quick roll and tumble that follows a heavy sea that most of the accidents happen, for then everything thinks that the worst is over and goes off guard. So he orated and chattered till the beams and frames and floors and stringers and things had learned how to lock down and lock up on one another, and endure this new kind of strain.

They found ample time to practise, for they were sixteen days at sea, and it was foul weather till within a hundred miles of New York. The 'Dimbula' picked up her pilot, and came in covered with salt and red rust. Her funnel was dirty gray from top to bottom; two boats had been carried away; three copper ventilators looked like hats after a fight with the police; the bridge had a dimple in the middle of it; the house that covered the steam steering-gear was split as with hatchets; there was a bill for small repairs in the engine-room almost as long as the screw-shaft; the forward cargo-hatch fell into bucket-staves when they raised the iron cross-bars; and the steam-capstan had been badly wrenched on its bed. Altogether, as the skipper said, it was 'a pretty general average.'

'But she's soupled,' he said to Mr. Buchanan. 'For all her dead weight she rode like a yacht. Ye mind that last blow off the Banks? I am proud of her, Buck.'

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‘It’s vara good,’ said the chief engineer, looking along the dishevelled decks. ‘Now, a man judgin’ superfecially would say we were a wreck, but we know otherwise—by experience.’

Naturally everything in the ‘Dimbula’ fairly stiffened with pride, and the foremast and the forward collision-bulkhead, who are pushing creatures, begged the Steam to warn the Port of New York of their arrival. ‘Tell those big boats all about us,’ they said. ‘They seem to take us quite as a matter of course.’

It was a glorious, clear, dead calm morning, and in single file, with less than half a mile between each, their bands playing and their tug-boats shouting and waving handkerchiefs, were the ‘Majestic,’ the ‘Paris,’ the ‘Touraine,’ the ‘Servia,’ the ‘Kaiser Wilhelm II.,’ and the ‘Werkendam,’ all statelily going out to sea. As the ‘Dimbula’ shifted her helm to give the great boats clear way, the Steam (who knows far too much to mind making an exhibition of himself now and then) shouted:

‘Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! Princes, Dukes, and Barons of the High Seas! Know ye by these presents, we are the “Dimbula,” fifteen days nine hours from Liverpool, having crossed the Atlantic with three thousand ton of cargo for the first time in our career! We have not foundered. We are here. ‘Eer! ‘Eer! We are not disabled. But we have had a time wholly unparalleled in the annals of shipbuilding! Our decks were swept! We pitched; we rolled! We thought we were going to die! Hi! Hi! But we didn’t. We wish to give notice that we have come to New York all the way across the Atlantic, through the worst weather in the world; and we are the “Dimbula”! We are—arr—ha—ha—ha-r-r-r!’

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The beautiful line of boats swept by as steadily as the procession of the Seasons. The 'Dimbula' heard the 'Majestic' say, 'Hmph!' and the 'Paris' grunted, 'How!' and the 'Touraine' said, 'Oui!' with a little coquettish flicker of steam; and the 'Servia' said, 'Haw!' and the 'Kaiser' and the 'Werkendam' said, 'Hoch!' Dutch-fashion—and that was absolutely all.

'I did my best,' said the Steam, gravely, 'but I don't think they were much impressed with us, somehow. Do you?'

'It's simply disgusting,' said the bow-plates. 'They might have seen what we've been through. There isn't a ship on the sea that has suffered as we have—is there, now?'

'Well, I wouldn't go so far as that,' said the Steam, 'because I've worked on some of those boats, and sent them through weather quite as bad as the fortnight that we've had, in six days; and some of them are a little over ten thousand tons, I believe. Now I've seen the "Majestic," for instance, ducked from her bows to her funnel; and I've helped the "Arizona," I think she was, to back off an iceberg she met with one dark night; and I had to run out of the "Paris's" engine-room, one day, because there was thirty foot of water in it. Of course, I don't deny—' The Steam shut off suddenly, as a tug-boat, loaded with a political club and a brass band, that had been to see a New York Senator off to Europe, crossed their bows, going to Hoboken. There was a long silence that reached, without a break, from the cut-water to the propeller-blades of the 'Dimbula.'

Then a new, big voice said slowly and thickly, as though the owner had just waked up: 'It's my conviction that I have made a fool of myself.'

THE SHIP THAT FOUND HERSELF

The Steam knew what had happened at once; for when a ship finds herself all the talking of the separate pieces ceases and melts into one voice, which is the soul of the ship.

‘Who are you?’ he said, with a laugh.

‘I am the “Dimbula,” of course. I’ve never been anything else except that—and a fool!’

The tug-boat, which was doing its very best to be run down, got away just in time, its band playing clashily and brassily a popular but impolite air:

In the days of old Rameses—are you on?

In the days of old Rameses—are you on?

In the days of old Rameses,

That story had paresis,

Are you on—are you on—are you on?

‘Well, I’m glad you’ve found yourself,’ said the Steam. ‘To tell the truth I was a little tired of talking to all those ribs and stringers. Here’s Quarantine. After that we’ll go to our wharf and clean up a little, and—next month we’ll do it all over again.’

THE TOMB OF HIS ANCESTORS

(1897)

SOME people will tell you that if there were but a single loaf of bread in all India it would be divided equally between the Plowdens, the Trevors, the Beadons, and the Rivett-Carnacs. That is only one way of saying that certain families serve India generation after generation as dolphins follow in line across the open sea.

Let us take a small and obscure case. There has been at least one representative of the Devonshire Chinns in or near Central India since the days of Lieutenant-Fireworker Humphrey Chinn, of the Bombay European Regiment, who assisted at the capture of Seringapatam in 1799. Alfred Ellis Chinn, Humphrey's younger brother, commanded a regiment of Bombay grenadiers from 1804 to 1813, when he saw some mixed fighting; and in 1834 John Chinn of the same family—we will call him John Chinn the First—came to light as a level-headed administrator in time of trouble at a place called Mundesur. He died young, but left his mark on the new country, and the Honourable the Board of Directors of the Honourable the East India Company embodied his virtues in a stately resolution, and paid for the expenses of his tomb among the Satpura hills.

He was succeeded by his son, Lionel Chinn, who left

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the little old Devonshire home just in time to be severely wounded in the Mutiny. He spent his working life within a hundred and fifty miles of John Chinn's grave, and rose to the command of a regiment of small, wild hill-men, most of whom had known his father. His son John was born in the small thatched-roofed, mud-walled cantonment, which is, even to-day, eighty miles from the nearest railway, in the heart of a scrubby, tigerish country. Colonel Lionel Chinn served thirty years and retired. In the Canal his steamer passed the outward-bound troopship carrying his son John Chinn the Second eastward to the family duties.

The Chinns are luckier than most folk, because they know exactly what they must do. A clever Chinn passes for the Bombay Civil Service, and gets away to Central India, where everybody is glad to see him. A dull Chinn enters the Police Department or the Woods and Forests, and sooner or later he, too, appears in Central India, and that is what gave rise to the saying, 'Central India is inhabited by Bhils, Mairs, and Chinns, all very much alike.' The breed is small-boned, dark, and silent, and the stupidest of them are good shots. John Chinn the Second was rather clever, but as the eldest son he entered the army, according to Chinn tradition. His duty was to abide in his father's regiment for the term of his natural life, though the corps was one which most men would have paid heavily to avoid. They were irregulars, small, dark, and blackish, clothed in rifle-green with black-leather trimmings; and friends called them the 'Wuddars,' which means a race of low-caste people who dig up rats to eat. But the Wuddars did not resent it. They were the only Wuddars, and their points of pride were these:

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Firstly, they had fewer English officers than any native regiment. Secondly, their subalterns were not mounted on parade, as is the general rule, but walked at the head of their men. A man who can hold his own with the Wuddars at their quickstep must be sound in wind and limb. Thirdly, they were the most pukka shikarries (out-and-out hunters) in all India. Fourthly—up to one hundredthly—they were the Wuddars—Chinn's Irregular Bhil Levies of the old days, but now, henceforward and for ever, the Wuddars.

No Englishman entered their mess except for love or through family usage. The officers talked to their soldiers in a tongue not two hundred white folk in India understood; and the men were their children, all drawn from the Bhils, who are, perhaps, the strangest of the many strange races in India. They were, and at heart are, wild men, furtive, shy, full of untold superstitions. The races whom we call natives of the country found the Bhil in possession of the land when they first broke into that part of the world thousands of years ago. The books call them Pre-Aryan, Aboriginal, Dravidian, and so forth; and, in other words, that is what the Bhils call themselves. When a Rajput chief, whose bards can sing his pedigree backwards for twelve hundred years, is set on the throne, his investiture is not complete till he has been marked on the forehead with blood from the veins of a Bhil. The Rajputs say the ceremony has no meaning, but the Bhil knows that it is the last, last shadow of his old rights as the long-ago owner of the soil.

Centuries of oppression and massacre made the Bhil a cruel and half-crazy thief and cattle-stealer, and when the English came he seemed to be almost as open to

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civilisation as the tigers of his own jungles. But John Chinn the First, father of Lionel, grandfather of our John, went into his country, lived with him, learned his language, shot the deer that stole his poor crops, and won his confidence, so that some Bhils learned to plough and sow, while others were coaxed into the Company's service to police their friends.

When they understood that standing in line did not mean instant execution, they accepted soldiering as a cumbrous but amusing kind of sport, and were zealous to keep the wild Bhils under control. That was the thin edge of the wedge. John Chinn the First gave them written promises that, if they were good from a certain date, the Government would overlook previous offences; and since John Chinn was never known to break his word—he promised once to hang a Bhil locally esteemed invulnerable, and hanged him in front of his tribe for seven proved murders—the Bhils settled down as steadily as they knew how. It was slow, unseen work, of the sort that is being done all over India to-day; and though John Chinn's only reward came, as I have said, in the shape of a grave at Government expense, the little people of the hills never forgot him.

Colonel Lionel Chinn knew and loved them too, and they were very fairly civilised, for Bhils, before his service ended. Many of them could hardly be distinguished from low-caste Hindoo farmers; but in the south, where John Chinn the First was buried, the wildest still clung to the Satpura ranges, cherishing a legend that some day Jan Chinn, as they called him, would return to his own. In the meantime they mistrusted the white man and his ways. The least excitement would stampede them plundering at random, and now and

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then killing; but if they were handled discreetly they grieved like children, and promised never to do it again.

The Bhils of the regiment—the uniformed men—were virtuous in many ways, but they needed humouring. They felt bored and homesick unless taken after tigers as beaters; and their cold-blooded daring—all Wuddars shoot tigers on foot: it is their caste-mark—made even the officers wonder. They would follow up a wounded tiger as unconcerned as though it were a sparrow with a broken wing; and this through a country full of caves and rifts and pits, where a wild beast could hold a dozen men at his mercy. Now and then some little man was brought to barracks with his head smashed in or his ribs torn away; but his companions never learned caution. They contented themselves with settling the tiger.

Young John Chinn was decanted at the veranda of the Wuddars' lonely mess-house from the back seat of a two-wheeled cart, his gun-cases cascading all round him. The slender, little, hookey-nosed boy looked forlorn as a strayed goat when he slapped the white dust off his knees, and the cart jolted down the glaring road. But in his heart he was contented. After all, this was the place where he had been born, and things were not much changed since he had been sent to England, a child, fifteen years ago.

There were a few new buildings, but the air and the smell and the sunshine were the same; and the little green men who crossed the parade-ground looked very familiar. Three weeks ago John Chinn would have said he did not remember a word of the Bhil tongue, but at the mess-door he found his lips moving in sentences that he did not understand—bits of old nursery rhymes, and

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tail-ends of such orders as his father used to give the men.

The Colonel watched him come up the steps, and laughed.

‘Look!’ he said to the Major. ‘No need to ask the young un’s breed. He’s a pukka Chinn. Might be his father in the Fifties over again.’

‘Hope he’ll shoot as straight,’ said the Major. ‘He’s brought enough ironmongery with him.’

‘Wouldn’t be a Chinn if he didn’t. Watch him blowin’ his nose. Regular Chinn beak. Flourishes his handkerchief like his father. It’s the second edition—line for line.’

‘Fairy tale, by Jove!’ said the Major, peering through the slats of the jalousies. ‘If he’s the lawful heir, he’ll . . . Now old Chinn could no more pass that chick without fiddling with it than . . .

‘His son!’ said the Colonel, jumping up.

‘Well, I be blowed!’ said the Major. The boy’s eye had been caught by a split reed screen that hung on a slew between the veranda pillars, and mechanically he had tweaked the edge to set it level. Old Chinn had sworn three times a day at that screen for many years; he could never get it to his satisfaction. His son entered the anteroom in the middle of a five-fold silence. They made him welcome for his father’s sake and, as they took stock of him, for his own. He was ridiculously like the portrait of the Colonel on the wall, and when he had washed a little of the dust from his throat he went to his quarters with the old man’s short, noiseless jungle-step.

‘So much for heredity,’ said the Major. ‘That comes of three generations among the Bhils.’

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'And the men know it,' said a Wing-officer. 'They've been waiting for this youth with their tongues hanging out. I am persuaded that, unless he absolutely beats 'em over the head, they'll lie down by companies and worship him.'

'Nothin' like havin' a father before you,' said the Major. 'I'm a parvenu with my chaps. I've only been twenty years in the regiment, and my revered parent he was a simple squire. There's no getting at the bottom of a Bhil's mind. Now, why is the superior bearer that young Chin brought with him fleeing across country with his bundle?' He stepped into the veranda, and shouted after the man—a typical new-joined subaltern's servant who speaks English and cheats his master.

'What is it?' he called.

'Plenty bad men here. I going, sar,' was the reply. 'Have taken Sahib's keys, and say will shoot.'

'Doocid lucid—doocid convincin'. How those up-country thieves can legit! He has been badly frightened by some one.' The Major strolled to his quarters to dress for mess.

Young Chinn, walking like a man in a dream, had fetched a compass round the entire cantonment before going to his own tiny cottage. The captain's quarters, in which he had been born, delayed him for a little; then he looked at the well on the parade-ground, where he had sat of evenings with his nurse, and at the ten-by-fourteen church, where the officers went to service if a chaplain of any official creed happened to come along. It seemed very small compared with the gigantic building he used to stare up at, but it was the same place.

From time to time he passed a knot of silent soldiers,

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who saluted. They might have been the very men who had carried him on their backs when he was in his first knickerbockers. A faint light burned in his room, and, as he entered, hands clasped his feet, and a voice murmured from the floor.

‘Who is it?’ said young Chinn, not knowing that he spoke in the Bhil tongue.

‘I bore you in my arms, Sahib, when I was a strong man and you were a small one—crying, crying, crying! I am your servant, as I was your father’s before you. We are all your servants.’

Young Chinn could not trust himself to reply, and the voice went on:

‘I have taken your keys from that fat foreigner, and sent him away; and the studs are in the shirt for mess. Who should know, if I do not know? And so the baby has become a man, and forgets his nurse; but my nephew shall make a good servant, or I will beat him twice a day.’

Then there rose up, with a rattle, as straight as a Bhil arrow, a little white-haired wizened ape of a man, with medals and orders on his tunic, stammering, saluting, and trembling. Behind him a young and wiry Bhil, in uniform, was taking the trees out of Chinn’s mess-boots.

Chinn’s eyes were full of tears. The old man held out his keys.

‘Foreigners are bad people. He will never come back again. We are all servants of your father’s son. Has the Sahib forgotten who took him to see the trapped tiger in the village across the river, when his mother was so frightened and he was so brave?’

The scene came back to Chinn in great magic-lantern flashes. ‘Bukta!’ he cried; and all in a breath: ‘You promised nothing should hurt me. Is it Bukta?’

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The man was at his feet a second time. 'He has not forgotten. He remembers his own people as his father remembered. Now can I die. But first I will live and show the Sahib how to kill tigers. That that yonder is my nephew. If he is not a good servant, beat him and send him to me, and I will surely kill him, for now the Sahib is with his own people. Ai, Jan baba—Jan baba! My Jan baba! I will stay here and see that this does his work well. Take off his boots, fool. Sit down upon the bed, Sahib, and let me look. It is Jan baba?'

He pushed forward the hilt of his sword as a sign of service, which is an honour paid only to viceroys, governors, generals, or to little children whom one loves dearly. Chinn touched the hilt mechanically with three fingers, muttering he knew not what. It happened to be the old answer of his childhood, when Buktā in jest called him the little General Sahib.

The Major's quarters were opposite Chinn's, and when he heard his servant gasp with surprise he looked across the room. Then the Major sat on the bed and whistled; for the spectacle of the senior native commissioned officer of the regiment, an 'unmixed' Bhil, a Companion of the Order of British India, with thirty-five years' spotless service in the army, and a rank among his own people superior to that of many Bengal princelings, valeting the last-joined subaltern, was a little too much for his nerves.

The throaty bugles blew the Mess-call that has a long legend behind it. First a few piercing notes like the shrieks of beaters in a far-away cover, and next, large, full, and smooth, the refrain of the wild song: 'And oh, and oh, the green pulse of Mundore—Mundore!'

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‘All little children were in bed when the Sahib heard that call last,’ said Bukta, passing Chinn a clean handkerchief. The call brought back memories of his cot under the mosquito-netting, his mother’s kiss, and the sound of footsteps growing fainter as he dropped asleep among his men. So he hooked the dark collar of his new mess-jacket, and went to dinner like a prince who has newly inherited his father’s crown.

Old Bukta swaggered forth curling his whiskers. He knew his own value, and no money and no rank within the gift of the Government would have induced him to put studs in young officers’ shirts, or to hand them clean ties. Yet, when he took off his uniform that night, and squatted among his fellows for a quiet smoke, he told them what he had done, and they said that he was entirely right. Thereat Bukta propounded a theory which to a white mind would have seemed raving insanity; but the whispering, level-headed little men of war considered it from every point of view, and thought that there might be a great deal in it.

At mess under the oil-lamps the talk turned as usual to the unfailing subject of shikar—big-game shooting of every kind and under all sorts of conditions. Young Chinn opened his eyes when he understood that each one of his companions had shot several tigers in the Wuddar style—on foot, that is—making no more of the business than if the brute had been a dog.

‘In nine cases out of ten,’ said the Major, ‘a tiger is almost as dangerous as a porcupine. But the tenth time you come home feet first.’

That set all talking, and long before midnight Chinn’s brain was in a whirl with stories of tigers—man-eaters and cattle-killers each pursuing his own business as

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methodically as clerks in an office; new tigers that had lately come into such-and-such a district; and old, friendly beasts of great cunning, known by nicknames in the mess—such as ‘Puggy,’ who was lazy, with huge paws, and ‘Mrs. Malaprop,’ who turned up when you never expected her, and made female noises. Then they spoke of Bhil superstitions, a wide and picturesque field, till young Chinn hinted that they must be pulling his leg.

‘Deed we aren’t,’ said a man on his left. ‘We know all about you. You’re a Chinn and all that, and you’ve a sort of vested right here; but if you don’t believe what we’re telling you, what will you do when old Bukta begins his stories? He knows about ghost-tigers, and tigers that go to a hell of their own; and tigers that walk on their hind feet; and your grandpapa’s riding-tiger, as well. Odd he hasn’t spoken of that yet.’

‘You know you’ve an ancestor buried down Satpura way, don’t you?’ said the Major, as Chinn smiled irresolutely.

‘Of course I do,’ said Chinn, who had the chronicle of the Book of Chinn by heart. It lies in a worn old ledger on the Chinese lacquer table behind the piano in the Devonshire home, and the children are allowed to look at it on Sundays.

‘Well, I wasn’t sure. Your revered ancestor, my boy, according to the Bhils, has a tiger of his own—a saddle-tiger that he rides round the country whenever he feels inclined. I don’t call it decent in an ex-Collector’s ghost; but that is what the Southern Bhils believe. Even our men, who might be called moderately cool, don’t care to beat that country if they hear that Jan Chinn is running about on his tiger. It is supposed to

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be a clouded animal—not stripy, but blotchy, like a tortoise-shell tom-cat. No end of a brute, it is, and a sure sign of war or pestilence or—or something. There's a nice family legend for you.'

'What's the origin of it, d'you suppose?' said Chinn.

'Ask the Satpura Bhils. Old Jan Chinn was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Perhaps it was the tiger's revenge, or perhaps he's huntin' 'em still. You must go to his tomb one of these days and inquire. Bukta will probably attend to that. He was asking me before you came whether by any ill-luck you had already bagged your tiger. If not, he is going to enter you under his own wing. Of course, for you of all men it's imperative. You'll have a first-class time with Bukta.'

The Major was not wrong. Bukta kept an anxious eye on young Chinn at drill, and it was noticeable that the first time the new officer lifted up his voice in an order the whole line quivered. Even the Colonel was taken aback, for it might have been Lionel Chinn returned from Devonshire with a new lease of life. Bukta had continued to develop his peculiar theory among his intimates, and it was accepted as a matter of faith in the lines, since every word and gesture on young Chinn's part so confirmed it.

The old man arranged early that his darling should wipe out the reproach of not having shot a tiger; but he was not content to take the first or any beast that happened to arrive. In his own villages he dispensed the high, low, and middle justice, and when his people—naked and fluttered—came to him with word of a beast marked down, he bade them send spies to the kills and the watering-places, that he might be sure the quarry was such an one as suited the dignity of such a man.

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Three or four times the reckless trackers returned, most truthfully saying that the beast was mangy, undersized—a tigress worn with nursing, or a broken-toothed old male—and Bukta would curb young Chinn's impatience.

At last, a noble animal was marked down—a ten-foot cattle-killer with a huge roll of loose skin along the belly, glossy-hided, full-frilled about the neck, whiskered, frisky, and young. He had slain a man in pure sport, they said.

'Let him be fed,' quoth Bukta, and the villagers dutifully drove out cows to amuse him, that he might lie up near by.

Princes and potentates have taken ship to India and spent great moneys for the mere glimpse of beasts one-half as fine as this of Bukta's.

'It is not good,' said he to the Colonel, when he asked for shooting-leave, 'that my Colonel's son who may be—that my Colonel's son should lose his maidenhead on any small jungle beast. That may come after. I have waited long for this which is a tiger. He has come in from the Mair country. In seven days we will return with the skin.'

The mess gnashed their teeth enviously. Bukta, had he chosen, might have invited them all. But he went out alone with Chinn, two days in a shooting-cart and a day on foot, till they came to a rocky, glary valley with a pool of good water in it. It was a parching day, and the boy very naturally stripped and went in for a bathe, leaving Bukta by the clothes. A white skin shows far against brown jungle, and what Bukta beheld on Chinn's back and right shoulder dragged him forward step by step with staring eyeballs.

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‘I’d forgotten it isn’t decent to strip before a man of his position,’ said Chinn, flouncing in the water. ‘How the little devil stares! What is it, Bukta?’

‘The Mark!’ was the whispered answer.

‘It is nothing. You know how it is with my people!’ Chinn was annoyed. The dull-red birth-mark on his shoulder, something like a conventionalised Tartar cloud, had slipped his memory, or he would not have bathed. It occurred, so they said at home, in alternate generations, appearing, curiously enough, eight or nine years after birth, and, save that it was part of the Chinn inheritance, would not be considered pretty. He hurried ashore, dressed again, and went on till they met two or three Bhils, who promptly fell on their faces. ‘My people,’ grunted Bukta, not condescending to notice them. ‘And so your people, Sahib. When I was a young man we were fewer, but not so weak. Now we are many, but poor stock. As may be remembered. How will you shoot him, Sahib? From a tree; from a shelter which my people shall build; by day or by night?’

‘On foot and in the daytime,’ said young Chinn.

‘That was your custom, as I have heard,’ said Bukta to himself. ‘I will get news of him. Then you and I will go to him. I will carry one gun. You have yours. There is no need of more. What tiger shall stand against thee?’

He was marked down by a little water-hole at the head of a ravine, full-gorged and half asleep in the May sunlight. He was walked up like a partridge, and he turned to do battle for his life. Bukta made no motion to raise his rifle, but kept his eyes on Chinn, who met the shattering roar of the charge with a single shot—it seemed to him hours as he sighted—which tore through the

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throat, smashing the backbone below the neck and between the shoulders. The brute crouched, choked, and fell, and before Chinn knew well what had happened Bukta bade him stay still while he paced the distance between his feet and the ringing jaws.

‘Fifteen,’ said Bukta. ‘Short paces. No need for a second shot, Sahib. He bleeds cleanly where he lies, and we need not spoil the skin. I said there would be no need of these, but they came—in case.’

Suddenly the sides of the ravine were crowned with the heads of Bukta's people—a force that could have blown the ribs out of the beast had Chinn's shot failed; but their guns were hidden, and they appeared as interested beaters, some five or six, waiting the word to skin. Bukta watched the life fade from the wild eyes, lifted one hand, and turned on his heel.

‘No need to show that we care,’ said he. ‘Now, after this, we can kill what we choose. Put out your hand, Sahib.’

Chinn obeyed. It was entirely steady, and Bukta nodded. ‘That also was your custom. My men skin quickly. They will carry the skin to cantonments. Will the Sahib come to my poor village for the night and, perhaps, forget that I am his officer?’

‘But those men—the beaters. They have worked hard, and perhaps—’

‘Oh, if they skin clumsily, we will skin them. They are my people. In the Lines I am one thing. Here I am another.’

This was very true. When Bukta doffed uniform and reverted to the fragmentary dress of his own people, he left his civilisation of drill in the next world. That night, after a little talk with his subjects, he devoted

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to an orgie; and a Bhil orgie is a thing not to be safely written about. Chinn, flushed with triumph, was in the thick of it, but the meaning of the mysteries was hidden. Wild folk came and pressed about his knees with offerings. He gave his flask to the elders of the village. They grew eloquent, and wreathed him about with flowers. Gifts and loans, not all seemly, were thrust upon him, and infernal music rolled and maddened round red fires, while singers sang songs of the ancient times, and danced peculiar dances. The aboriginal liquors are very potent, and Chinn was compelled to taste them often, but, unless the stuff had been drugged, how came he to fall asleep suddenly, and to waken late the next day—half a march from the village?

‘The Sahib was very tired. A little before dawn he went to sleep,’ Bukta explained. ‘My people carried him here, and now it is time we should go back to cantonments.’

The voice, smooth and deferential, the step, steady and silent, made it hard to believe that only a few hours before Bukta was yelling and capering with naked fellow-devils of the scrub.

‘My people were very pleased to see the Sahib. They will never forget. When next the Sahib goes out recruiting, he will go to my people, and they will give him as many men as we need.’

Chinn kept his own counsel, except as to the shooting of the tiger, and Bukta embroidered that tale with a shameless tongue. The skin was certainly one of the finest ever hung up in the mess, and the first of many. When Bukta could not accompany his boy on shooting-trips, he took care to put him in good hands, and Chinn learned more of the mind and desire of the wild

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Bhil in his marches and campings, by talks at twilight or at wayside pools, than an uninstructed man could have come at in a lifetime.

Presently his men in the regiment grew bold to speak of their relatives—mostly in trouble—and to lay cases of tribal custom before him. They would say, squatting in his veranda at twilight, after the easy, confidential style of the Wuddars, that such-and-such a bachelor had run away with such-and-such a wife at a far-off village. Now, how many cows would Chinn Sahib consider a just fine? Or, again, if written order came from the Government that a Bhil was to repair to a walled city of the plains to give evidence in a law-court, would it be wise to disregard that order? On the other hand, if it were obeyed, would the rash voyager return alive?

‘But what have I to do with these things?’ Chinn demanded of Bukta, impatiently. ‘I am a soldier. I do not know the Law.’

‘Hoo! Law is for fools and white men. Give them a large and loud order and they will abide by it. Thou art their Law.’

‘But wherefore?’

Every trace of expression left Bukta's countenance. The idea might have smitten him for the first time. ‘How can I say?’ he replied. ‘Perhaps it is on account of the name. A Bhil does not love strange things. Give them orders, Sahib—two, three, four words at a time—such as they can carry away in their heads. That is enough.’

Chinn gave orders then, valiantly, not realising that a word spoken in haste before mess became the dread unappealable law of villages beyond the smoky hills—

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was, in truth, no less than the Law of Jan Chinn the First, who, so the whispered legend ran, had come back to earth to oversee the third generation in the body and bones of his grandson.

There could be no sort of doubt in this matter. All the Bhils knew that Jan Chinn reincarnated had honoured Bukta's village with his presence after slaying his first—in this life—tiger; that he had eaten and drunk with the people, as he was used; and—Bukta must have drugged Chinn's liquor very deeply—upon his back and right shoulder all men had seen the same angry red Flying Cloud that the high Gods had set on the flesh of Jan Chinn the First when first he came to the Bhil. As concerned the foolish white world which has no eyes, he was a slim and young officer in the Wuddars; but his own people knew he was Jan Chinn, who had made the Bhil a man; and, believing, they hastened to carry his words, careful never to alter them on the way.

Because the savage and the child who plays lonely games have one horror of being laughed at or questioned, the little folk kept their convictions to themselves; and the Colonel, who thought he knew his regiment, never guessed that each one of the six hundred quick-footed, beady-eyed rank-and-file, at attention beside their rifles, believed serenely and unshakenly that the subaltern on the left flank of the line was a demigod twice born—tutelary deity of their land and people. The Earth-gods themselves had stamped the incarnation, and who would dare to doubt the handiwork of the Earth-gods?

Chinn, being practical above all things, saw that his family name served him well in the lines and in camp. His men gave no trouble—one does not commit regimental offences with a god in the chair of justice—and

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he was sure of the best beaters in the district when he needed them. They believed that the protection of Jan Chinn the First cloaked them, and were bold in that belief beyond the utmost daring of excited Bhils.

His quarters began to look like an amateur natural-history museum, in spite of duplicate heads and horns and skulls that he sent home to Devonshire. The people, very humanly, learned the weak side of their god. It is true he was unbribable, but bird-skins, butterflies, beetles, and, above all, news of big game pleased him. In other respects, too, he lived up to the Chinn tradition. He was fever-proof. A night's sitting out over a tethered goat in a damp valley, that would have filled the Major with a month's malaria, had no effect on him. He was, as they said, 'salted before he was born.'

Now in the autumn of his second year's service an uneasy rumour crept out of the earth and ran about among the Bhils. Chinn heard nothing of it till a brother-officer said across the mess-table: 'Your revered ancestor's on the rampage in the Satpura country. You'd better look him up.'

'I don't want to be disrespectful, but I'm a little sick of my revered ancestor. Bukta talks of nothing else. What's the old boy supposed to be doing now?'

'Riding cross-country by moonlight on his processional tiger. That's the story. He's been seen by about two thousand Bhils, skipping along the tops of the Satpuras, and scaring people to death. They believe it devoutly, and all the Satpura chaps are worshipping away at his shrine—tomb, I mean—like good 'uns. You really ought to go down there. 'Must be a queer thing to see your grandfather treated as a god.'

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‘What makes you think there’s any truth in the tale?’ said Chinn.

‘Because all our men deny it. They say they’ve never heard of Chinn’s tiger. Now that’s a manifest lie, because every Bhil has.’

‘There’s only one thing you’ve overlooked,’ said the Colonel, thoughtfully. ‘When a local god reappears on earth it’s always an excuse for trouble of some kind; and those Satpura Bhils are about as wild as your grandfather left them, young ’un. It means something.’

‘Meanin’ they may go on the war-path?’ said Chinn.

‘Can’t say—as yet. Shouldn’t be surprised one little bit.’

‘I haven’t been told a syllable.’

‘Proves it all the more. They are keeping something back.’

‘Bukta tells me everything, too, as a rule. Now, why didn’t he tell me that?’

Chinn put the question directly to the old man that night, and the answer surprised him.

‘Why should I tell what is well known? Yes, the Clouded Tiger is out in the Satpura country.’

‘What do the wild Bhils think that it means?’

‘They do not know. They wait. Sahib, what is coming? Say only one little word, and we will be content.’

‘We? What have tales from the south, where the jungly Bhils live, to do with drilled men?’

‘When Jan Chinn wakes is no time for any Bhil to be quiet.’

‘But he has not waked, Bukta.’

‘Sahib’—the old man’s eyes were full of tender reproof—‘if he does not wish to be seen, why does he go abroad in the moonlight? We know he is awake, but

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we do not know what he desires. Is it a sign for all the Bhils, or one that concerns the Satpura folk alone? Say one little word, Sahib, that I may carry it to the lines, and send on to our villages. Why does Jan Chinn ride out? Who has done wrong? Is it pestilence? Is it murrain? Will our children die? Is it a sword? Remember, Sahib, we are thy people and thy servants, and in this life I bore thee in my arms—not knowing.'

'Bukta had evidently looked on the cup this evening,' Chinn thought; 'but if I can do anything to soothe the old chap I must. It's like the Mutiny rumours on a small scale.'

He dropped into a deep wicker chair, over which was thrown his first tiger-skin, and his weight on the cushion flapped the clawed paws over his shoulders. He laid hold of them mechanically as he spoke, drawing the painted hide, cloak-fashion, about him.

'Now will I tell the truth, Bukta,' he said, leaning forward, the dried muzzle on his shoulder, to invent a specious lie.

'I see that it is the truth,' was the answer, in a shaking voice.

'Jan Chinn goes abroad among the Satpuras, riding on the Clouded Tiger, ye say? Be it so. Therefore the sign of the wonder is for the Satpura Bhils only, and does not touch the Bhils who plough in the north and east, the Bhils of the Khandesh, or any others, except the Satpura Bhils, who, as we know, are wild and foolish.'

'It is, then, a sign for them. Good or bad?'

'Beyond doubt, good. For why should Jan Chinn make evil to those whom he has made men? The nights over yonder are hot; it is ill to lie in one bed over long without turning, and Jan Chinn would look again upon

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his people. So he rises, whistles his Clouded Tiger, and goes abroad a little to breathe the cool air. If the Satpura Bhils kept to their villages, and did not wander after dark, they would not see him. Indeed, Bukta, it is no more than that he would see the light again in his own country. Send this news south, and say that it is my word.'

Bukta bowed to the floor. 'Good Heavens!' thought Chinn, 'and this blinking pagan is a first-class officer, and as straight as a die! I may as well round it off neatly.' He went on:

'If the Satpura Bhils ask the meaning of the sign, tell them that Jan Chinn would see how they kept their old promises of good living. Perhaps they have plundered; perhaps they mean to disobey the orders of the Government; perhaps there is a dead man in the jungle; and so Jan Chinn has come to see.'

'Is he, then, angry?'

'Bah! Am I ever angry with my Bhils? I say angry words, and threaten many things. Thou knowest, Bukta. I have seen thee smile behind the hand. I know, and thou knowest. The Bhils are my children. I have said it many times.'

'Ay. We be thy children,' said Bukta.

'And no otherwise is it with Jan Chinn, my father's father. He would see the land he loved and the people once again. It is a good ghost, Bukta, I say it. Go and tell them. And I do hope devoutly,' he added, 'that it will calm 'em down.' Flinging back the tiger-skin, he rose with a long, unguarded yawn that showed his well-kept teeth.

Bukta fled, to be received in the lines by a knot of panting inquirers.

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'It is true,' said Bukta. 'He wrapped himself in the skin and spoke from it. He would see his own country again. The sign is not for us; and, indeed, he is a young man. How should he lie idle of nights? He says his bed is too hot and the air is bad. He goes to and fro for the love of night-running. He has said it.'

The gray-whiskered assembly shuddered.

'He says the Bhils are his children. Ye know he does not lie. He has said it to me.'

'But what of the Satpura Bhils? What means the sign for them?'

'Nothing. It is only night-running, as I have said. He rides to see if they obey the Government, as he taught them to do in his first life.'

'And what if they do not?'

'He did not say.'

The light went out in Chinn's quarters.

'Look,' said Bukta. 'Now he goes away. None the less it is a good ghost, as he has said. How shall we fear Jan Chinn, who made the Bhil a man? His protection is on us; and ye know Jan Chinn never broke a protection spoken or written on paper. When he is older and has found him a wife he will lie in his bed till morning.'

A commanding officer is generally aware of the regimental state of mind a little before the men; and this is why the Colonel said a few days later that some one had been putting the fear of God into the Wuddars. As he was the only person officially entitled to do this, it distressed him to see such unanimous virtue. 'It's too good to last,' he said. 'I only wish I could find out what the little chaps mean.'

The explanation, as it seemed to him, came at the change of the moon, when he received orders to hold

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himself in readiness to 'allay any possible excitement' among the Satpura Bhils, who were, to put it mildly, uneasy because a paternal Government had sent up against them a Mahratta State-educated vaccinator, with lancets, lymph, and an officially registered calf. In the language of State, they had 'manifested a strong objection to all prophylactic measures,' had 'forcibly detained the vaccinator,' and 'were on the point of neglecting or evading their tribal obligations.'

'That means they are in a blue funk—same as they were at census-time,' said the Colonel; 'and if we stam-pede them into the hills we'll never catch 'em, in the first place, and, in the second, they'll whoop off plundering till further orders. 'Wonder who the God-forsaken idiot is who is trying to vaccinate a Bhil. I knew trouble was coming. One good thing is that they'll only use local corps, and we can knock up something we'll call a campaign, and let them down easy. Fancy us potting our best beaters because they don't want to be vaccinated! They're only crazy with fear.'

'Don't you think, sir,' said Chinn the next day, 'that perhaps you could give me a fortnight's shooting-leave?'

'Desertion in the face of the enemy, by Jove!' The Colonel laughed. 'I might, but I'd have to antedate it a little, because we're warned for service, as you might say. However, we'll assume that you applied for leave three days ago, and are now well on your way south.'

'I'd like to take Bukta with me.'

'Of course, yes. I think that will be the best plan. You've some kind of hereditary influence with the little chaps, and they may listen to you when a glimpse of our uniforms would drive them wild. You've never been in that part of the world before, have you? Take care

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they don't send you to your family vault in your youth and innocence. I believe you'll be all right if you can get 'em to listen to you.'

'I think so, sir; but if—if they should accidentally put an—make asses of 'emselves—they might, you know—I hope you'll represent that they were only frightened. There isn't an ounce of real vice in 'em, and I should never forgive myself if any one of—of my name got them into trouble.'

The Colonel nodded, but said nothing.

Chinn and Bukta departed at once. Bukta did not say that, ever since the official vaccinator had been dragged into the hills by indignant Bhils, runner after runner had skulked up to the lines, entreating, with forehead in the dust, that Jan Chinn should come and explain this unknown horror that hung over his people.

The portent of the Clouded Tiger was now too clear. Let Jan Chinn comfort his own, for vain was the help of mortal man. Bukta toned down these beseechings to a simple request for Chinn's presence. Nothing would have pleased the old man better than a rough-and-tumble campaign against the Satpuras, whom he, as an 'unmixed' Bhil, despised; but he had a duty to all his nation as Jan Chinn's interpreter, and he devoutly believed that forty plagues would fall on his village if he tampered with that obligation. Besides, Jan Chinn knew all things, and he rode the Clouded Tiger.

They covered thirty miles a day on foot and pony, raising the blue wall-like line of the Satpuras as swiftly as might be. Bukta was very silent.

They began the steep climb a little after noon, but it was near sunset ere they reached the stone platform clinging to the side of a rifted, jungle-covered hill, where Jan Chinn the First was laid, as he had desired, that he

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might overlook his people. All India is full of neglected graves that date from the beginning of the eighteenth century—tombs of forgotten colonels of corps long since disbanded; mates of East Indiamen who went on shooting expeditions and never came back; factors, agents, writers, and ensigns of the Honourable the East India Company by hundreds and thousands and tens of thousands. English folk forget quickly, but natives have long memories, and if a man has done good in his life it is remembered after his death. The weathered marble four-square tomb of Jan Chinn was hung about with wild flowers and nuts, packets of wax and honey, bottles of native spirits, and infamous cigars, with buffalo horns and plumes of dried grass. At one end was a rude clay image of a white man, in the old-fashioned top-hat, riding on a bloated tiger.

Buk'ta salaamed reverently as they approached. Chinn bared his head and began to pick out the blurred inscription. So far as he could read it ran thus—word for word, and letter for letter:—

To the Memory of John Chinn, Esq.

Late Collector of

. . . . ithout Bloodshed or . . . error of Authority
Employ . only . . eans of Conciliat . . . and Confiden.
accomplished the . . . tire Subjection . . .
a Lawless and Predatory Peop . . .
. . . . taching them to ish Government
by a Conque . . over Minds
The most perma . . . and rational Mode of Domini . .
. . . Governor-General and Counc . . . engal
have ordered thi erected
. . . arted this Life Aug. 19, 184 . Ag . . .

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On the other side of the grave were ancient verses, also very worn. As much as Chinn could decipher said:

. . . . the savage band
Forsook their Haunts and b is Command
. . . . mended . . rals check a . . . st for spoil
And . s . ing Hamlets prove his gene toil
Humanit . . . survey ights restore . .
A nation . . ield . . subdued without a Sword.

For some little time he leaned on the tomb thinking of this dead man of his own blood, and of the house in Devonshire; then, nodding to the plains: 'Yes; it's a big work—all of it—even my little share. He must have been worth knowing. . . . Bukta, where are my people?'

'Not here, Sahib. No man comes here except in full sun. They wait above. Let us climb and see.'

But Chinn, remembering the first law of Oriental diplomacy, in an even voice answered: 'I have come this far only because the Satpura folk are foolish, and dared not visit our lines. Now bid them wait on me here. I am not the servant, but the master of Bhils.'

'I go—I go,' clucked the old man. Night was falling, and at any moment Jan Chinn might whistle up his dreaded steed from the darkening scrub.

Now for the first time in a long life Bukta disobeyed a lawful command and deserted his leader; for he did not come back, but pressed to the flat table-top of the hill, and called softly. Men stirred all about him—little trembling men with bows and arrows who had watched the two since noon.

'Where is he?' whispered one.

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‘At his own place. He bids you come,’ said Bukta.

‘Now?’

‘Now.’

‘Rather let him loose the Clouded Tiger upon us. We do not go.’

‘Nor I, though I bore him in my arms when he was a child in this his life. Wait here till the day.’

‘But surely he will be angry.’

‘He will be very angry, for he has nothing to eat. But he has said to me many times that the Bhils are his children. By sunlight I believe this, but—by moonlight I am not so sure. What folly have ye Satpura pigs compassed that ye should need him at all?’

‘One came to us in the name of the Government with little ghost-knives and a magic calf, meaning to turn us into cattle by the cutting off of our arms. We were greatly afraid, but we did not kill the man. He is here, bound—a black man; and we think he comes from the West. He said it was an order to cut us all with knives—especially the women and the children. We did not hear that it was an order, so we were afraid, and kept to our hills. Some of our men have taken ponies and bullocks from the plains, and others pots and cloths and ear-rings.’

‘Are any slain?’

‘By our men? Not yet. But the young men are blown to and fro by many rumours like flames upon a hill. I sent runners asking for Jan Chinn lest worse should come to us. It was this fear that he foretold by the sign of the Clouded Tiger.’

‘He says it is otherwise,’ said Bukta; and he repeated, with amplifications, all that young Chinn had told him at the conference of the wicker chair.

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‘Think you,’ said the questioner, at last, ‘that the Government will lay hands on us?’

‘Not I,’ Bukta rejoined. ‘Jan Chinn will give an order, and ye will obey. The rest is between the Government and Jan Chinn. I myself know something of the ghost-knives and the scratching. It is a charm against the Smallpox. But how it is done I cannot tell. Nor need that concern you.’

‘If he stands by us and before the anger of the Government we will most strictly obey Jan Chinn, except—except we do not go down to that place to-night.’

They could hear young Chinn below them shouting for Bukta; but they covered and sat still, expecting the Clouded Tiger. The tomb had been holy ground for nearly half a century. If Jan Chinn chose to sleep there, who had better right? But they would not come within eyeshot of the place till broad day.

At first Chinn was exceedingly angry, till it occurred to him that Bukta most probably had a reason (which indeed, he had), and his own dignity might suffer if he yelled without answer. He propped himself against the foot of the grave, and, alternately dozing and smoking, came through the warm night proud that he was a lawful, legitimate, fever-proof Chinn.

He prepared his plan of action much as his grandfather would have done; and when Bukta appeared in the morning with a most liberal supply of food, said nothing of the overnight desertion. Bukta would have been relieved by an outburst of human anger; but Chinn finished his victual leisurely, and a cheroot, ere he made any sign.

‘They are very much afraid,’ said Bukta, who was not too bold himself. ‘It remains only to give orders.

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They said they will obey if thou wilt only stand between them and the Government.'

'That I know,' said Chinn, strolling slowly to the tableland. A few of the elder men stood in an irregular semicircle in an open glade; but the ruck of people—women and children—were hidden in the thicket. They had no desire to face the first anger of Jan Chinn the First.

Seating himself on a fragment of split rock, he smoked his cheroot to the butt, hearing men breathe hard all about him. Then he cried, so suddenly that they jumped:

'Bring the man that was bound!'

A scuffle and a cry were followed by the appearance of a Hindoo vaccinator, quaking with fear, bound hand and foot, as the Bhils of old were accustomed to bind their human sacrifices. He was pushed cautiously before the presence; but young Chinn did not look at him.

'I said—the man that was bound. Is it a jest to bring me one tied like a buffalo? Since when could the Bhil bind folk at his pleasure? Cut!'

Half a dozen hasty knives cut away the thongs, and the man crawled to Chinn, who pocketed his case of lancets and tubes of lymph. Then, sweeping the semicircle with one comprehensive forefinger, and in the voice of compliment, he said, clearly and distinctly: 'Pigs!'

'Ai!' whispered Bukta. 'Now he speaks. Woe to foolish people!'

'I have come on foot from my house' (the assembly shuddered) 'to make clear a matter which any other than a Satpura Bhil would have seen with both eyes from a distance. Ye know the Smallpox, who pits and scars your children so that they look like wasp-combs.

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It is an order of the Government that whoso is scratched on the arm with these little knives which I hold up is charmed against Her. All Sahibs are thus charmed, and very many Hindoos. This is the mark of the charm. Look!'

He rolled back his sleeve to the armpit and showed the white scars of the vaccination-mark on the white skin. 'Come, all, and look.'

A few daring spirits came up, and nodded their heads wisely. There was certainly a mark, and they knew well what other dread marks were hidden by the shirt. Merciful was Jan Chinn, that he had not then and there proclaimed his godhead.

'Now all these things the man whom ye bound told you.'

'I did—a hundred times; but they answered with blows,' groaned the operator, chafing his wrists and ankles.

'But, being pigs, ye did not believe; and so came I here to save you, first from Smallpox, next from a great folly of fear, and lastly, it may be, from the rope and the jail. It is no gain to me; it is no pleasure to me; but for the sake of that one who is yonder, who made the Bhil a man—he pointed down the hill—'I, who am of his blood, the son of his son, come to turn your people. And I speak the truth, as did Jan Chinn.'

The crowd murmured reverently, and men stole out of the thicket by twos and threes to join it. There was no anger in their god's face.

'These are my orders. (Heaven send they'll take'em, but I seem to have impressed them so far!) I myself will stay among you while this man scratches your arms with knives, after the order of the Government. In

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three, or it may be five or seven, days, your arms will swell and itch and burn. That is the power of Smallpox fighting in your base blood against the orders of the Government. I will therefore stay among you till I see that Smallpox is conquered, and I will not go away till the men and the women and the little children show me upon their arms such marks as I have even now showed you. I bring with me two very good guns, and a man whose name is known among beasts and men. We will hunt together, I and he, and your young men and the others shall eat and lie still. This is my order.'

There was a long pause while victory hung in the balance. A white-haired old sinner, standing on one uneasy leg, piped up:

'There are ponies and some few bullocks and other things for which we need a kowl [protection]. They were not taken in the way of trade.'

The battle was won, and John Chinn drew a breath of relief. The young Bhils had been raiding, but if taken swiftly all could be put straight.

'I will write a kowl as soon as the ponies, the bullocks, and the other things are counted before me and sent back whence they came. But first we will put the Government mark on such as have not been visited by Smallpox.' In an undertone, to the vaccinator: 'If you show you are afraid you'll never see Poona again, my friend.'

'There is not sufficient ample supply of vaccine for all this population,' said the man. 'They have destroyed the offeecial calf.'

'They won't know the difference. Scrape 'em all round, and give me a couple of lancets; I'll attend to the elders.'

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The aged diplomat who had demanded protection was the first victim. He fell to Chinn's hand, and dared not cry out. As soon as he was freed he dragged up a companion, and held him fast, and the crisis became, as it were, a child's sport; for the vaccinated chased the unvaccinated to treatment, vowing that all the tribe must suffer equally. The women shrieked, and the children ran howling; but Chinn laughed, and waved the pink-tipped lancet.

'It is an honour,' he cried. 'Tell them, Bukta, how great an honour it is that I myself should mark them. Nay, I cannot mark every one—the Hindoo must also do his work—but I will touch all marks that he makes, so there will be an equal virtue in them. Thus do the Rajputs stick pigs. Ho, brother with one eye! Catch that girl and bring her to me. She need not run away yet, for she is not married, and I do not seek her in marriage. She will not come? Then she shall be shamed by her little brother, a fat boy, a bold boy. He puts out his arm like a soldier. Look! He does not flinch at the blood. Some day he shall be in my regiment. And now, mother of many, we will lightly touch thee, for Smallpox has been before us here. It is a true thing, indeed, that this charm breaks the power of Mata. There will be no more pitted faces among the Satpuras, and so ye can ask many cows for each maid to be wed.'

And so on and so on—quick-poured showman's patter, sauced in the Bhil hunting proverbs and tales of their own brand of coarse humour—till the lancets were blunted and both operators worn out.

But, nature being the same the world over, the unvaccinated grew jealous of their marked comrades, and came near to blows about it. Then Chinn declared

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himself a court of justice, no longer a medical board, and made formal inquiry into the late robberies.

‘We are the thieves of Mahadeo,’ said the Bhils, simply. ‘It is our fate, and we were frightened. When we are frightened we always steal.’

Simply and directly as children, they gave in the tale of the plunder, all but two bullocks and some spirits that had gone amissing (these Chinn promised to make good out of his own pocket), and ten ringleaders were despatched to the lowlands with a wonderful document, written on the leaf of a note-book, and addressed to an assistant district superintendent of police. There was warm calamity in that note, as Jan Chinn warned them, but anything was better than loss of liberty.

Armed with this protection, the repentant raiders went down-hill. They had no desire whatever to meet Mr. Dundas Fawne of the Police, aged twenty-two, and of a cheerful countenance, nor did they wish to revisit the scene of their robberies. Steering a middle course, they ran into the camp of the one Government chaplain allowed to the various irregular corps through a district of some fifteen thousand square miles, and stood before him in a cloud of dust. He was by way of being a priest, they knew, and, what was more to the point, a good sportsman who paid his beaters generously.

When he read Chinn’s note he laughed, which they deemed a lucky omen, till he called up policemen, who tethered the ponies and the bullocks by the piled house-gear, and laid stern hands upon three of that smiling band of the thieves of Mahadeo. The chaplain himself addressed them magisterially with a riding-whip. That was painful, but Jan Chinn had prophesied it. They submitted, but would not give up the written protection,

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fearing the jail. On their way back they met Mr. D. Fawne, who had heard about the robberies, and was not pleased.

‘Certainly,’ said the eldest of the gang, when the second interview was at an end, ‘certainly Jan Chinn’s protection has saved us our liberty, but it is as though there were many beatings in one small piece of paper. Put it away.’

One climbed into a tree, and stuck the letter into a cleft forty feet from the ground, where it could do no harm. Warmed, sore, but happy, the ten returned to Jan Chinn next day, where he sat among uneasy Bhils, all looking at their right arms, and all bound under terror of their god’s disfavour not to scratch.

‘It was a good kowl,’ said the leader. ‘First the chaplain, who laughed, took away our plunder, and beat three of us, as was promised. Next, we meet Fawne Sahib, who frowned, and asked for the plunder. We spoke the truth, and so he beat us all, one after another, and called us chosen names. He then gave us these two bundles’—they set down a bottle of whisky and a box of cheroots—‘and we came away. The kowl is left in a tree, because its virtue is that so soon as we show it to a Sahib we are beaten.’

‘But for that kowl,’ said Jan Chinn, sternly, ‘ye would all have been marching to jail with a policeman on either side. Ye come now to serve as beaters for me. These people are unhappy, and we will go hunting till they are well. To-night we will make a feast.’

It is written in the chronicles of the Satpura Bhils, together with many other matters not fit for print, that through five days, after the day that he had put his mark upon them, Jan Chinn the First hunted for his

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people; and on the five nights of those days the tribe was gloriously and entirely drunk. Jan Chinn bought country spirits of an awful strength, and slew wild pig and deer beyond counting, so that if any fell sick they might have two good reasons.

Between head- and stomach-aches they found no time to think of their arms, but followed Jan Chinn obediently through the jungles, and with each day's returning confidence men, women, and children stole away to their villages as the little army passed by. They carried news that it was good and right to be scratched with ghost-knives; that Jan Chinn was indeed reincarnated as a god of free food and drink, and that of all nations the Satpura Bhils stood first in his favour, if they would only refrain from scratching. Henceforward that kindly demi-god would be connected in their minds with great gorgings and the vaccine and lancets of a paternal Government.

'And to-morrow I go back to my home,' said Jan Chinn to his faithful few, whom neither spirits, over-eating, nor swollen glands could conquer. It is hard for children and savages to behave reverently at all times to the idols of their make-belief, and they had frolicked excessively with Jan Chinn. But the reference to his home cast a gloom on the people.

'And the Sahib will not come again?' said he who had been vaccinated first.

'That is to be seen,' answered Chinn, warily.

'Nay, but come as a white man—come as a young man whom we know and love; for, as thou alone knowest, we are a weak people. If we again saw thy—thy horse—' They were picking up their courage.

'I have no horse. I came on foot—with Bukta, yonder. What is this?'

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‘Thou knowest—the Thing that thou hast chosen for a night-horse.’ The little men squirmed in fear and awe.

‘Night-horses? Bukta, what is this last tale of children?’

Bukta had been a silent leader in Chinn’s presence since the night of his desertion, and was grateful for a chance-flung question.

‘They know, Sahib,’ he whispered. ‘It is the Clouded Tiger. That which comes from the place where thou didst once sleep. It is thy horse—as it has been these three generations.’

‘My horse! That was a dream of the Bhils.’

‘It is no dream. Do dreams leave the tracks of broad pugs on earth? Why make two faces before thy people? They know of the night-ridings, and they—and they—’

‘Are afraid, and would have them cease.’

Bukta nodded. ‘If thou hast no further need of him. He is thy horse.’

‘The thing leaves a trail, then?’ said Chinn.

‘We have seen it. It is like a village road under the tomb.’

‘Can ye find and follow it for me?’

‘By daylight—if one comes with us, and, above all, stands near by.’

‘I will stand close, and we will see to it that Jan Chinn does not ride any more.’

The Bhils shouted the last words again and again.

From Chinn’s point of view the stalk was nothing more than an ordinary one—down-hill, through split and crannied rocks, unsafe, perhaps, if a man did not keep his wits by him, but no worse than twenty others

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he had undertaken. Yet his men—they refused absolutely to beat, and would only trail—dripped sweat at every move. They showed the marks of enormous pugs that ran, always down-hill, to a few hundred feet below Jan Chinn's tomb, and disappeared in a narrow-mouthed cave. It was an insolently open road, a domestic highway, beaten without thought of concealment.

'The beggar might be paying rent and taxes,' Chinn muttered ere he asked whether his friend's taste ran to cattle or man.

'Cattle,' was the answer. 'Two heifers a week. We drive them for him at the foot of the hill. It is his custom. If we did not, he might seek us.'

'Blackmail and piracy,' said Chinn. 'I can't say I fancy going into the cave after him. What's to be done?'

The Bhils fell back as Chinn lodged himself behind a rock with his rifle ready. Tigers, he knew, were shy beasts, but one who had been long cattle-fed in this sumptuous style might prove overbold.

'He speaks!' some one whispered from the rear. 'He knows, too.'

'Well, of all the infernal cheek!' said Chinn. There was an angry growl from the cave—a direct challenge.

'Come out, then,' Chinn shouted. 'Come out of that! Let's have a look at you.'

The brute knew well enough that there was some connection between brown nude Bhils and his weekly allowance; but the white helmet in the sunlight annoyed him, and he did not approve of the voice that broke his rest. Lazily as a gorged snake he dragged himself out of the cave, and stood yawning and blinking at the entrance. The sunlight fell upon his flat right side, and Chinn wondered. Never had he seen a tiger marked

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after this fashion. Except for his head, which was startlingly barred, he was dappled—not striped, but dappled like a child's rocking-horse in rich shades of smoky black on red gold. That portion of his belly and throat which should have been white was orange, and his tail and paws were black.

He looked leisurely for some ten seconds, and then deliberately lowered his head, his chin dropped and drawn in, staring intently at the man. The effect of this was to throw forward the round arch of his skull, with two broad bands across it, while below the bands glared the unwinking eyes; so that, head on, as he stood, he showed something like a diabolically scowling pantomime-mask. It was a piece of natural mesmerism that he had practised many times on his quarry, and though Chinn was by no means a terrified heifer, he stood for a while, held by the extraordinary oddity of the attack. The head—the body seemed to have been packed away behind it—the ferocious, skull-like head, crept nearer to the switching of an angry tail-tip in the grass. Left and right the Bhils had scattered to let John Chinn subdue his own horse.

‘My word!’ he thought. ‘He’s trying to frighten me!’ and fired between the saucer-like eyes, leaping aside upon the shot.

A big coughing mass, reeking of carrion, bounded past him up the hill, and he followed discreetly. The tiger made no attempt to turn into the jungle; he was hunting for sight and breath—nose up, mouth open, the tremendous fore-legs scattering the gravel in spurts.

‘Scuppered!’ said John Chinn, watching the flight. ‘Now if he was a partridge he’d tower. Lungs must be full of blood.’

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The brute had jerked himself over a boulder and fallen out of sight the other side. John Chinn looked over with a ready barrel. But the red trail led straight as an arrow even to his grandfather's tomb, and there, among the smashed spirit bottles and the fragments of the mud image, the life left with a flurry and a grunt.

'If my worthy ancestor could see that,' said John Chinn, 'he'd have been proud of me. Eyes, lower jaw, and lungs. A very nice shot.' He whistled for Bukta as he drew the tape over the stiffening bulk.

'Ten—six—eight—by Jove! It's nearly eleven—call it eleven. Fore-arm, twenty-four—five—seven and a half. A short tail, too; three feet one. But what a skin! Oh, Bukta! Bukta! The men with the knives swiftly.'

'Is he beyond question dead?' said an awe-stricken voice behind a rock.

'That was not the way I killed my first tiger,' said Chinn. 'I did not think that Bukta would run. I had no second gun.'

'It—it is the Clouded Tiger,' said Bukta, unheeding the taunt. 'He is dead.'

Whether all the Bhils, vaccinated and unvaccinated, of the Satpuras had lain by to see the kill, Chinn could not say; but the whole hill's flank rustled with little men, shouting, singing, and stamping. And yet, till he had made the first cut in the splendid skin, not a man would take a knife; and, when the shadows fell, they ran from the red-stained tomb, and no persuasion would bring them back till dawn. So Chinn spent a second night in the open, guarding the carcass from jackals, and thinking about his ancestor.

He returned to the lowlands, to the triumphal chant

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of an escorting army three hundred strong, the Mahratta vaccinator close at his elbow, and the rudely dried skin a trophy before him. When that army suddenly and noiselessly disappeared, as do quail in high corn, he argued he was near civilisation, and a turn in the road brought him upon the camp of a wing of his own corps. He left the skin on a cart-tail for the world to see, and sought the Colonel.

‘They’re perfectly right,’ he explained earnestly. ‘There isn’t an ounce of vice in ’em. They were only frightened. I’ve vaccinated the whole boiling, and they like it awfully. What are—what are we doing here, sir?’

‘That’s what I’m trying to find out,’ said the Colonel. ‘I don’t know yet whether we’re a piece of a brigade or a police force. However, I think we’ll call ourselves a police force. How did you manage to get a Bhil vaccinated?’

‘Well, sir,’ said Chinn, ‘I’ve been thinking it over, and, as far as I can make out, I’ve got a sort of hereditary influence over ’em.’

‘So I know, or I wouldn’t have sent you; but what, exactly?’

‘It’s rather rummy. It seems, from what I can make out, that I’m my own grandfather reincarnated, and I’ve been disturbing the peace of the country by riding a pad-tiger of nights. If I hadn’t done that, I don’t think they’d have objected to the vaccination; but the two together were more than they could stand. And so, sir, I’ve vaccinated ’em, and shot my tiger-horse as a sort o’ proof of good faith. You never saw such a skin in your life.’

The Colonel tugged his moustache thoughtfully.

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‘Now, how the deuce,’ said he, ‘am I to include that in my report?’

Indeed, the official version of the Bhils’ anti-vaccination stampede said nothing about Lieutenant John Chinn, his godship. But Bukta knew, and the corps knew, and every Bhil in the Satpura hills knew.

And now Bukta is zealous that John Chinn shall swiftly be wedded and impart his powers to a son; for if the Chinn succession fails, and the little Bhils are left to their own imaginings, there will be fresh trouble in the Satpuras.

THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP SEA

(1895)

All supplies very bad and dear, and there are no facilities for even the smallest repairs.—‘Sailing Directions.’

HER nationality was British, but you will not find her house-flag in the list of our mercantile marine. She was a nine-hundred-ton, iron, schooner-rigged, screw cargo-boat, differing externally in no way from any other tramp of the sea. But it is with steamers as it is with men. There are those who will for a consideration sail extremely close to the wind; and, in the present state of a fallen world, such people and such steamers have their use. From the hour that the ‘Aglaia’ first entered the Clyde—new, shiny, and innocent, with a quart of cheap champagne trickling down her cutwater—Fate and her owner, who was also her captain, decreed that she should deal with embarrassed crowned heads, fleeing Presidents, financiers of over-extended ability, women to whom change of air was imperative, and the lesser law-breaking Powers. Her career led her sometimes into the Admiralty Courts, where the sworn statements of her skipper filled his brethren with envy. The mariner cannot tell or act a lie in the face of the sea, or mislead a tempest; but, as lawyers have discovered, he makes up for chances with-

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held when he returns to shore, an affidavit in either hand.

The 'Aglaia' figured with distinction in the great 'Mackinaw' salvage case. It was her first slip from virtue, and she learned how to change her name, but not her heart, and to run across the sea. As the 'Guiding Light' she was very badly wanted in a South American port for the little matter of entering harbour at full speed, colliding with a coal-hulk and the State's only man-of-war, just as that man-of-war was going to coal. She put to sea without explanations, though three forts fired at her for half an hour. As the 'Julia M'Gregor' she had been concerned in picking up from a raft certain gentlemen who should have stayed in Noumea, but who preferred making themselves vastly unpleasant to authority in quite another quarter of the world; and as the 'Shah-in-Shah' she had been overtaken on the high seas, indecently full of munitions of war, by the cruiser of an agitated Power at issue with its neighbour. That time she was very nearly sunk, and her riddled hull gave eminent lawyers of two countries great profit. After a season she reappeared as the 'Martin Hunt,' painted a dull slate colour, with pure saffron funnel, and boats of sparrow's-egg blue, engaging in the Odessa trade till she was invited (and the invitation could not well be disregarded) to keep away from Black Sea ports altogether.

She had ridden through many waves of depression. Freights might drop out of sight, Seamen's Unions throw spanners and nuts at certificated masters, or stevedores combine till cargo perished on the dockhead; but the boat of many names came and went, busy, alert, and inconspicuous always. Her skipper made no complaint of hard times, and port officers observed that her crew

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signed and signed again with the regularity of Atlantic liner boatswains. Her name she changed as occasion called; her well-paid crew never; and a large percentage of the profits of her voyages was spent with an open hand on her engine-room. She never troubled the underwriters, and very seldom stopped to talk with a signal-station; for her business was urgent and private.

But an end came to her tradings, and she perished in this manner. Deep peace brooded over Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Australasia, and Polynesia. The Powers dealt together more or less honestly; banks paid their depositors to the hour; diamonds of price came safely to the hands of their owners; republics rested content with their dictators; diplomats found no one whose presence in the least incommoded them; monarchs lived openly with their lawfully wedded wives. It was as though the whole earth had put on its best Sunday bib and tucker;—and business was very bad for the ‘Martin Hunt.’ The great, virtuous calm engulfed her, slate sides, yellow funnel, and all, but cast up in another hemisphere the steam-whaler ‘Haliotis,’ black and rusty, with a manure-coloured funnel, a litter of dingy white boats, and an enormous stove, or furnace, for boiling blubber on her forward well-deck. There could be no doubt that her trip was successful, for she lay at several ports not too well known, and the smoke of her trying-out insulted the beaches.

Anon she departed, at the speed of the average London four-wheeler, and entered a semi-inland sea, warm, still, and blue, which is, perhaps, the most strictly preserved water in the world. There she stayed for a certain time, and the great stars of those mild skies beheld her playing puss-in-the-corner among islands

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where whales are never found. All that time she smelt abominably, and the smell, though fishy, was not whale-some. One evening calamity descended upon her from the island of Pygang-Watai, and she fled, while her crew jeered at a fat black-and-brown gunboat puffing far behind. They knew to the last revolution the capacity of every boat, on those seas, that they were anxious to avoid. A British ship with a good conscience does not, as a rule, flee from the man-of-war of a foreign Power, and it is also considered a breach of etiquette to stop and search British ships at sea. These things the skipper of the 'Haliotis' did not pause to prove, but held on at an inspiring eleven knots till nightfall. One thing only he overlooked.

The Power that kept an expensive steam-patrol moving up and down those waters (they had dodged the two regular ships of the station with an ease that bred contempt) had newly brought up a third and a fourteen-knot boat with a clean bottom to help the work; and that was why the 'Haliotis,' driving hard from the east to the west, found herself at daylight in such a position that she could not help seeing an arrangement of four flags, a mile and a half behind, which read: 'Heave to, or take the consequences!'

She had her choice, and she took it, and the end came when, presuming on her lighter draught, she tried to draw away northward over a friendly shoal. The shell that arrived by way of the Chief Engineer's cabin was some five inches in diameter, with a practice, not a bursting, charge. It had been intended to cross her bows, and that was why it knocked the framed portrait of the Chief Engineer's wife—and she was a very pretty girl—on to the floor, splintered his wash-hand stand,

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crossed the alleyway into the engine-room, and striking on a grating, dropped directly in front of the forward engine, where it burst, neatly fracturing both the bolts that held the connecting-rod to the forward crank.

What follows is worth consideration. The forward engine had no more work to do. Its released piston-rod, therefore, drove up fiercely, with nothing to check it, and started most of the nuts of the cylinder-cover. It came down again, the full weight of the steam behind it, and the foot of the disconnected connecting-rod, useless as the leg of a man with a sprained ankle, flung out to the right and struck the starboard, or right-hand, cast-iron supporting-column of the forward engine, cracking it clean through about six inches above the base, and wedging the upper portion outwards three inches towards the ship's side. There the connecting-rod jammed. Meantime, the after engine, being as yet unembarrassed, went on with its work, and in so doing brought round at its next revolution the crank of the forward engine, which smote the already jammed connecting-rod, bending it and therewith the piston-rod cross-head—the big cross-piece that slides up and down so smoothly.

The cross-head jammed sideways in the guides, and in addition to putting further pressure on the already broken starboard supporting-column, cracked the port, or left-hand, supporting-column in two or three places. There being nothing more that could be made to move, the engines brought up, all standing, with a hiccup that seemed to lift the 'Haliotis' a foot out of the water; and the engine-room staff, opening every steam outlet that they could find in the confusion, arrived on deck somewhat scalded, but calm. There was a sound below of

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things happening—a rushing, clicking, purring, grunting, rattling noise that did not last for more than a minute. It was the machinery adjusting itself, on the spur of the moment, to a hundred altered conditions. Mr. Wardrop, one foot on the upper grating, inclined his ear sideways and groaned. You cannot stop engines working at twelve knots in three seconds without disorganising them. The ‘Haliotis’ slid forward in a cloud of steam, shrieking like a wounded horse. There was nothing more to do. The five-inch shell with a reduced charge had settled the situation. And when you are full, all three holds, of strictly preserved pearls; when you have cleaned out the Tanna Bank, the Sea-Horse Bank, and four other banks from one end to the other of the Amanala Sea—when you have ripped out the very heart of a rich Government monopoly so that five years will not repair your wrong-doings—you must smile and take what is in store. But the skipper reflected, as a launch put out from the man-of-war, that he had been bombarded on the high seas, with the British flag—several of them—picturesquely disposed above him, and tried to find comfort in the thought.

‘Where,’ said the stolid naval lieutenant hoisting himself aboard, ‘where are those dam’ pearls?’

They were there beyond evasion. No affidavit could do away with the fearful smell of decayed oysters, the diving-dresses, and the shell-littered hatches. They were there to the value of seventy thousand pounds, more or less; and every pound poached.

The man-of-war was annoyed; for she had used up many tons of coal, she had strained her tubes, and, worse than all, her officers and crew had been hurried. Every one on the ‘Haliotis’ was arrested and rearrested

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several times, as each officer came aboard; then they were told by what they esteemed to be the equivalent of a midshipman that they were to consider themselves prisoners, and finally were put under arrest.

'It's not the least good,' said the skipper, suavely. 'You'd much better send us a tow—'

'Be still—you are arrest!' was the reply.

'Where the devil do you expect we are going to escape to? We're helpless. You've got to tow us somewhere, and explain why you fired on us. Mr. Wardrop, we're helpless, aren't we?'

'Ruined from end to end,' said the man of machinery. 'If she rolls, the forward cylinder will come down and go through her bottom. Both columns are clean cut through. There's nothing to hold anything up.'

The council of war clanked off to see if Mr. Wardrop's words were true. He warned them that it was as much as a man's life was worth to enter the engine-room, and they contented themselves with a distant inspection through the thinning steam. The 'Haliotis' lifted to the long, easy swell, and the starboard supporting-column ground a trifle, as a man grits his teeth under the knife. The forward cylinder was depending on that unknown force men call the pertinacity of materials, which now and then balances that other heart-breaking power, the perversity of inanimate things.

'You see!' said Mr. Wardrop, hurrying them away. 'The engines aren't worth their price as old iron.'

'We tow,' was the answer. 'Afterwards we shall confiscate.'

The man-of-war was short-handed, and did not see the necessity for putting a prize-crew aboard the 'Haliotis.' So she sent one sub-lieutenant, whom the

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skipper kept very drunk, for he did not wish to make the tow too easy, and, moreover, he had an inconspicuous little rope hanging from the stern of his ship.

Then they began to tow at an average speed of four knots. The 'Haliotis' was very hard to move, and the gunnery-lieutenant, who had fired the five-inch shell, had leisure to think upon consequences. Mr. Wardrop was the busy man. He borrowed all the crew to shore up the cylinders, with spars and blocks, from the bottom and sides of the ship. It was a day's risky work; but anything was better than drowning at the end of a tow-rope; and if the forward cylinder had fallen, it would have made its way to the sea-bed, and taken the 'Haliotis' after.

'Where are we going to, and how long will they tow us?' he asked of the skipper.

'God knows! and this prize-lieutenant's drunk. What do you think you can do?'

'There's just the bare chance' Mr. Wardrop whispered, though no one was within hearing—'there's just the bare chance o' repairin' her, if a man knew how. They've twisted the very guts out of her, bringing her up with that jerk; but I'm saying that, with time and patience, there's just the chance of making steam yet. We could do it.'

The skipper's eye brightened. 'Do you mean,' he began, 'that she is any good?'

'Oh no,' said Mr. Wardrop. 'She'll need three thousand pounds in repairs, at the lowest, if she's to take the sea again, an' that apart from any injury to her structure. She's like a man fallen down five pair o' stairs. We can't tell for months what has happened; but we know she'll never be good again without a new inside.'

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Ye should see the condenser-tubes an' the steam connections to the donkey, for two things only. I'm not afraid of them repairin' her. I'm afraid of them stealin' things.'

'They've fired on us. They'll have to explain that.'

'Our reputation's not good enough to ask for explanations. Let's take what we have and be thankful. Ye would not have consuls rememberin' the "Guidin' Light," an' the "Shah-in-Shah," an' the "Aglaiia" at this most alarmin' crisis. We've been no better than pirates these ten years. Under Providence we're no worse than thieves now. We've much to be thankful for—if we e'er get back to her.'

'Make it your own way, then,' said the skipper, 'if there's the least chance—'

'I'll leave none,' said Mr. Wardrop—'none that they'll dare to take. Keep her heavy on the tow, for we need time.'

The skipper never interfered with the affairs of the engine-room, and Mr. Wardrop—an artist in his profession—turned to and composed a work terrible and forbidding. His background was the dark-grained sides of the engine-room; his material the metals of power and strength, helped out with spars, baulks, and ropes. The man-of-war towed sullenly and viciously. The 'Haliotis' behind her hummed like a hive before swarming. With extra and totally unneeded spars her crew blocked up the space round the forward engine till it resembled a statue in its scaffolding, and the butts of the shores interfered with every view that a dispassionate eye might wish to take. And that the dispassionate mind might be swiftly shaken out of its calm, the well-sunk bolts of the shores were wrapped round untidily

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with loose ends of ropes, giving a studied effect of most dangerous insecurity. Next, Mr. Wardrop took up a collection from the after engine, which, as you will remember, had not been affected in the general wreck. The cylinder escape-valve he abolished with a flogging-hammer. It is difficult in far-off ports to come by such valves, unless, like Mr. Wardrop, you keep duplicates in store. At the same time men took off the nuts of two of the great holding-down bolts that serve to keep the engines in place on their solid bed. An engine violently arrested in mid-career may easily jerk off the nut of a holding-down bolt, and this accident looked very natural.

Passing along the tunnel, he removed several shaft coupling-bolts and nuts, scattering other and ancient pieces of iron under foot. Cylinder-bolts he cut off to the number of six from the after engine cylinder, so that it might match its neighbour, and stuffed the bilge- and feed-pumps with cotton-waste. Then he made a neat bundle of the various odds and ends that he had gathered from the engines—little things like nuts and valve-spindles, all carefully tallowed—and retired with them under the floor of the engine-room, where he sighed, being fat, as he passed from manhole to manhole of the double bottom, and in a fairly dry submarine compartment hid them. Any engineer, particularly in an unfriendly port, has a right to keep his spare stores where he chooses; and the foot of one of the cylinder shores blocked all entrance into the regular storeroom, even if that had not been already closed with steel wedges. In conclusion, he disconnected the after engine, laid piston and connecting-rod, carefully tallowed, where it would be most inconvenient to the casual visitor, took out

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three of the eight collars of the thrust-block, hid them where only he could find them again, filled the boilers by hand, wedged the sliding doors of the coal-bunkers, and rested from his labours. The engine-room was a cemetery, and it did not need the contents of an ash-lift through the skylight to make it any worse.

He invited the skipper to look at the completed work.

'Saw ye ever such a forsaken wreck as that?' said he proudly. 'It almost frights me to go under those shores. Now, what d'you think they'll do to us?'

'Wait till we see,' said the skipper. 'It'll be bad enough when it comes.'

He was not wrong. The pleasant days of towing ended all too soon, though the 'Haliotis' trailed behind her a heavily weighted jib stayed out into the shape of a pocket; and Mr. Wardrop was no longer an artist of imagination, but one of seven-and-twenty prisoners in a prison full of insects. The man-of-war had towed them to the nearest port, not to the headquarters of the colony, and when Mr. Wardrop saw the dismal little harbour, with its ragged line of Chinese junks, its one crazy tug, and the boat-building shed that, under the charge of a philosophical Malay, represented a dock-yard, he sighed and shook his head.

'I did well,' he said. 'This is the habitation o' wreckers an' thieves. We're at the uttermost ends of the earth. Think you they'll ever know in England?'

'Doesn't look like it,' said the skipper.

They were marched ashore with what they stood up in, under a generous escort, and were judged according to the customs of the country, which, though excellent, are a little out of date. There were the pearls; there were the poachers; and there sat a small but hot Gover-

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nor. He consulted for a while, and then things began to move with speed, for he did not wish to keep a hungry crew at large on the beach, and the man-of-war had gone up the coast. With a wave of his hand—a stroke of the pen was not necessary—he consigned them to the blakgang-tana, the back country, and the hand of the Law removed them from his sight and the knowledge of men. They were marched into the palms, and the back country swallowed them up—all the crew of the ‘Haliotis.’

Deep peace continued to brood over Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Australasia, and Polynesia.

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It was the firing that did it. They should have kept their counsel; but when a few thousand foreigners are bursting with joy over the fact that a ship under the British flag had been fired at on the high seas, news travels quickly; and when it came out that the pearl-stealing crew had not been allowed access to their consul (there was no consul within a few hundred miles of that lonely port) even the friendliest of Powers has a right to ask questions. The great heart of the British public was beating furiously on account of the performance of a notorious race-horse, and had not a throb to waste on distant accidents; but somewhere deep in the hull of the ship of State there is machinery which more or less accurately takes charge of foreign affairs. That machinery began to revolve, and who so shocked and surprised as the Power that had captured the ‘Haliotis’? It explained that colonial governors and far-away men-of-war were difficult to control, and promised that it would most certainly make an example both of the Governor and the vessel. As for the crew, reported to

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be pressed into military service in tropical climes, it would produce them as soon as possible, and it would apologise, if necessary. Now, no apologies were needed. When one nation apologises to another, millions of amateurs who have no earthly concern with the difficulty hurl themselves into the strife and embarrass the trained specialist. It was requested that the crew be found, if they were still alive—they had been eight months beyond knowledge—and it was promised that all would be forgotten.

The little Governor of the little port was pleased with himself. Seven-and-twenty white men made a very compact force to throw away on a war that had neither beginning nor end—a jungle-and-stockade fight that flickered and smouldered through the wet, hot years in the hills a hundred miles away, and was the heritage of every wearied official. He had, he thought, deserved well of his country; and if only some one would buy the unhappy 'Haliotis,' moored in the harbour below his veranda, his cup would be full. He looked at the neatly silvered lamps that he had taken from her cabins, and thought of much that might be turned to account. But his countrymen in that moist climate had no spirit. They would peep into the silent engine-room, and shake their heads. Even the men-of-war would not tow her farther up the coast, where the Governor believed that she could be repaired. She was a bad bargain; but her cabin carpets were undeniably beautiful, and his wife approved of her mirrors.

Three hours later cables were bursting round him like shells, for, though he knew it not, he was being offered as a sacrifice by the nether to the upper millstone, and his superiors had no regard for his feelings.

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He had, said the cables, grossly exceeded his power, and failed to report on events. He would, therefore,—at this he cast himself back in his hammock—produce the crew of the ‘Haliotis.’ He would send for them, and, if that failed, he would put his dignity on a pony and fetch them himself. He had no conceivable right to make pearl-poachers serve in any war. He would be held responsible.

Next morning the cables wished to know whether he had found the crew of the ‘Haliotis.’ They were to be found, freed and fed—he was to feed them—till such time as they could be sent to the nearest English port in a man-of-war. If you abuse a man long enough in great words flashed over the sea-beds, things happen. The Governor sent inland swiftly for his prisoners, who were also soldiers; and never was a militia regiment more anxious to reduce its strength. No power short of death could make these mad men wear the uniform of their service. They would not fight, except with their fellows, and it was for that reason the regiment had not gone to war, but stayed in a stockade, reasoning with the new troops. The autumn campaign had been a fiasco, but here were the Englishmen. All the regiment marched back to guard them, and the hairy enemy, armed with blow-pipes, rejoiced in the forest. Five of the crew had died, but there lined up on the Governor’s veranda two-and-twenty men marked about the legs with the scars of leech-bites. A few of them wore fringes that had once been trousers; the others used loin-cloths of gay patterns; and they existed beautifully but simply in the Governor’s veranda; and when he came out they sang at him. When you have lost seventy thousand pounds’ worth of pearls, your pay, your ship, and all your clothes, and

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have lived in bondage for eight months beyond the faintest pretences of civilisation, you know what true independence means, for you become the happiest of created things—natural man.

The Governor told the crew that they were evil, and they asked for food. When he saw how they ate, and when he remembered that none of the pearl patrol-boats were expected for two months, he sighed. But the crew of the 'Haliotis' lay down in the veranda, and said that they were pensioners of the Governor's bounty. A gray-bearded man, fat and bald-headed, his one garment a green and yellow loin-cloth, saw the 'Haliotis' in the harbour, and bellowed with joy. The men crowded to the veranda-rail, kicking aside the long cane chairs. They pointed, gesticulated, and argued freely, without shame. The militia regiment sat down in the Governor's garden. The Governor retired to his hammock—it was as easy to be killed lying as standing—and his women squeaked from the shuttered rooms.

'She sold?' said the gray-bearded man, pointing to the 'Haliotis.' He was Mr. Wardrop.

'No good,' said the Governor, shaking his head. 'No one come buy.'

'He's taken my lamps, though,' said the skipper. He wore one leg of a pair of trousers, and his eye wandered along the veranda. The Governor quailed. There were cuddy camp-stools and the skipper's writing-table in plain sight.

'They've cleaned her out, o' course,' said Mr. Wardrop. 'They would. We'll go aboard and take an inventory. See!' He waved his hands over the harbour. 'We—live—there—now. Sorry?'

The Governor smiled a smile of relief.

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'He's glad of that,' said one of the crew, reflectively. 'I don't wonder.'

They flocked down to the harbour-front, the militia regiment clattering behind, and embarked themselves in what they found—it happened to be the Governor's boat. Then they disappeared over the bulwarks of the 'Haliotis,' and the Governor prayed that they might find occupation inside.

Mr. Wardrop's first bound took him to the engine-room; and when the others were patting the well-remembered decks, they heard him giving God thanks that things were as he had left them. The wrecked engines stood over his head untouched; no inexperienced hand had meddled with his shores; the steel wedges of the storeroom were rusted home; and, best of all, the hundred and sixty tons of good Australian coal in the bunkers had not diminished.

'I don't understand it,' said Mr. Wardrop. 'Any Malay knows the use o' copper. They ought to have cut away the pipes. And with Chinese junks coming here, too. It's a special interposition o' Providence.'

'You think so,' said the skipper, from above. 'There's only been one thief here, and he's cleaned her out of all my things, anyhow.'

Here the skipper spoke less than the truth, for under the planking of his cabin, only to be reached by a chisel, lay a little money which never drew any interest—his sheet-anchor to windward. It was all in clean sovereigns that pass current the world over, and might have amounted to more than a hundred pounds.

'He's left me alone. Let's thank God,' repeated Mr. Wardrop.

'He's taken everything else; look!'

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The 'Haliotis,' except as to her engine-room, had been systematically and scientifically gutted from one end to the other, and there was strong evidence that an unclean guard had camped in the skipper's cabin to regulate that plunder. She lacked glass, plate, crockery, cutlery, mattresses, cuddy carpets and chairs, all boats, and her copper ventilators. These things had been removed, with her sails and as much of the wire rigging as would not imperil the safety of the masts.

'He must have sold those,' said the skipper. 'The other things are in his house, I suppose.'

Every fitting that could be prized or screwed out was gone. Port, starboard, and masthead lights; teak gratings; sliding sashes of the deck-house; the captain's chest of drawers, with charts and chart-table; photographs, brackets, and looking-glasses; cabin doors; rubber cuddy-mats; hatch irons; half the funnel-stays; cork fenders; carpenter's grindstone and tool-chest; holy-stones, swabs, squeegees; all cabin and pantry lamps; galley fittings en bloc; flags and flag-locker; clocks, chronometers; the forward compass and the ship's bell and belfry, were among the missing.

There were great scarred marks on the deck-planking, over which the cargo-derricks had been hauled. One must have fallen by the way, for the bulwark-rails were smashed and bent and the side-plates bruised.

'It's the Governor,' said the skipper. 'He's been selling her on the instalment plan.'

'Let's go up with spanners and shovels, and kill 'em all,' shouted the crew. 'Let's drown him, and keep the woman!'

'Then we'll be shot by that black-and-tan regiment—our regiment. What's the trouble ashore? They've camped our regiment on the beach.'

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'We're cut off, that's all. Go and see what they want,' said Mr. Wardrop. 'You've the trousers.'

In his simple way the Governor was a strategist. He did not desire that the crew of the 'Haliotis' should come ashore again, either singly or in detachments, and he proposed to turn their steamer into a convict-hulk. They would wait—he explained this from the quay to the skipper in the barge—and they would continue to wait till the man-of-war came along, exactly where they were. If one of them set foot ashore, the entire regiment would open fire, and he would not scruple to use the two cannon of the town. Meantime food would be sent daily in a boat under an armed escort. The skipper, bare to the waist, and rowing, could only grind his teeth; and the Governor improved the occasion, and revenged himself for the bitter words in the cables, by telling what he thought of the morals and manners of the crew. The barge returned to the 'Haliotis' in silence, and the skipper climbed aboard, white on the cheek-bones and blue about the nostrils.

'I knew it,' said Mr. Wardrop; 'and they won't give us good food, either. We shall have bananas morning, noon, and night, an' a man can't work on fruit. We know that.'

Then the skipper cursed Mr. Wardrop for importing frivolous side-issues into the conversation; and the crew cursed one another, and the 'Haliotis,' the voyage, and all that they knew or could bring to mind. They sat down in silence on the empty decks, and their eyes burned in their heads. The green harbour water chuckled at them overside. They looked at the palm-fringed hills inland, at the white houses above the harbour road, at the single tier of native craft by the quay, at the

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stolid soldiery sitting round the two cannon, and, last of all, at the blue bar of the horizon. Mr. Wardrop was buried in thought, and scratched imaginary lines with his untrimmed finger-nails on the planking.

‘I make no promise,’ he said at last, ‘for I can’t say what may or may not have happened to them. But here’s the ship, and here’s us.’

There was a little scornful laughter at this, and Mr. Wardrop knitted his brows. He recalled that in the days when he wore trousers he had been chief engineer of the ‘Haliotis.’

‘Harland, Mackesy, Noble, Hay, Naughton, Fink, O’Hara, Trumbull.’

‘Here, sir!’ The instinct of obedience waked to answer the roll-call of the engine-room.

‘Below!’

They rose and went.

‘Captain, I’ll trouble you for the rest of the men as I want them. We’ll get my stores out, and clear away the shores we don’t need, and then we’ll patch her up. My men will remember that they’re in the “Haliotis”—under me.’

He went into the engine-room, and the others stared. They were used to the accidents of the sea, but this was beyond their experience. None who had seen the engine-room believed that anything short of new engines from end to end could stir the ‘Haliotis’ from her moorings.

The engine-room stores were unearthed, and Mr. Wardrop’s face, red with the filth of the bilges and the exertion of travelling on his stomach, lit with joy. The spare gear of the ‘Haliotis’ had been unusually complete, and two-and-twenty men, armed with screw-jacks, dif-

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ferential blocks, tackle, vices, and a forge or so, can look Kismet between the eyes without winking. The crew were ordered to replace the holding-down and shaft-bearing bolts, and return the collars of the thrust-block. When they had finished, Mr. Wardrop delivered a lecture on repairing compound engines without the aid of the shops while the men sat about on the cold machinery. The cross-head jammed in the guides leered at them drunkenly, but offered no help. They ran their fingers hopelessly into the cracks of the starboard supporting-column, and picked at the ends of the ropes round the shores, while Mr. Wardrop's voice rose and fell echoing, till the quick tropic night closed down over the engine-room skylight.

Next morning the work of reconstruction began.

It has been explained that the foot of the connecting-rod was forced against the foot of the starboard supporting-column, which it had cracked through and driven outward towards the ship's skin. To all appearance the job was more than hopeless, for rod and column seemed to have been welded into one. But herein Providence smiled on them for one moment to hearten them through the weary weeks ahead. The second engineer—more reckless than resourceful—struck at random with a cold chisel into the cast-iron of the column, and a greasy, gray flake of metal flew from under the imprisoned foot of the connecting-rod, while the rod itself fell away slowly, and brought up with a thunderous clang somewhere in the dark of the crank-pit. The guide-plates above were still jammed fast in the guides, but the first blow had been struck. They spent the rest of the day grooming the cargo-winch, which stood immediately forward of the engine-room hatch. Its

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tarpaulin, of course, had been stolen, and eight warm months had not improved the working parts. Further, the last dying hiccup of the 'Haliotis' seemed—or it might have been the Malay from the boat-house—to have lifted the thing bodily from its bolts, and set it down inaccurately as regarded its steam connections.

'If we only had one single cargo-derrick!' Mr. War-drop sighed. 'We can take the cylinder-cover off by hand, if we sweat; but to get the rod out o' the piston's not possible unless we use steam. Well, there'll be steam the morn, if there's nothing else. She'll fizzle!'

Next morning men from the shore saw the 'Haliotis' through a cloud, for it was as though the decks smoked. Her crew were chasing steam through the shaken and leakypipes to its work in the forward donkey-engine; and where oakum failed to plug a crack, they stripped off their loin-cloths for lapping, and swore, half-boiled and mother-naked. The donkey-engine worked—at a price—the price of constant attention and furious stoking—worked long enough to allow a wire rope (it was made up of a funnel and a foremast-stay) to be led into the engine-room and made fast on the cylinder-cover of the forward engine. That rose easily enough, and was hauled through the skylight and on to the deck; many hands assisting the doubtful steam. Then came the tug of war, for it was necessary to get to the piston and the jammed piston-rod. They removed two of the piston junk-ring studs, screwed in two strong iron eye-bolts by way of handles, doubled the wire rope, and set half-a-dozen men to smite with an extemporised battering-ram at the end of the piston-rod, where it peered through the piston, while the donkey-engine hauled upwards on the piston itself. After four hours of this

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killing work the piston-rod suddenly slipped, and the piston rose with a jerk, knocking one or two men over into the engine-room. But when Mr. Wardrop declared that the piston had not split, they cheered, and thought nothing of their wounds; and the donkey-engine was hastily stopped; its boiler was no thing to tamper with.

And day by day their supplies reached them by boat. The skipper humbled himself once more before the Governor, and as a concession had leave to get drinking-water from the Malay boat-builder on the quay. It was not good drinking-water, but the Malay was anxious to supply anything in his power, if he were paid for it.

Now, when the jaws of the forward engine stood, as it were, stripped and empty, they began to wedge up the shores of the cylinder itself. That work alone filled the better part of three days—warm and sticky days, when the hands slipped and sweat ran into the eyes. When the last wedge was hammered home there was no longer an ounce of weight on the supporting-columns; and Mr. Wardrop rummaged the ship for boiler-plate three-quarters of an inch thick, where he could find it. There was not much available, but what there was was more than beaten gold to him. In one desperate forenoon the entire crew, naked and lean, haled back, more or less to place, the starboard supporting-column, which, as you remember, was cracked clean through. Mr. Wardrop found them asleep where they had finished the work, and gave them a day's rest, smiling upon them as a father while he drew chalk-marks about the cracks. They woke to new and more trying labour; for over each one of those cracks a plate of three-quarter-inch boiler-iron was to be worked hot, the rivet-holes being drilled

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by hand. All that time they were fed on fruits, chiefly bananas, with some sago.

Those were the days when the men swooned over the ratchet-drill and the hand-forge, and where they fell they had leave to lie unless their bodies were in the way of their fellows' feet. And so, patch upon patch, and a patch over all, the starboard supporting-column was clouted; but when they thought all was secure, Mr. Wardrop decreed that the noble patchwork would never support working engines; at the best, it could only hold the guide-bars approximately true. The dead weight of the cylinders must be borne by vertical struts; and, therefore, a gang would repair to the bows, and take out, with files, the big bow-anchor davits, each of which was some three inches in diameter. They threw hot coals at Wardrop, and threatened to kill him, those who did not weep (they were ready to weep on the least provocation); but he hit them with iron bars heated at the end, and they limped forward, and the davits came with them when they returned. They slept sixteen hours on the strength of it, and in three days two struts were in place, bolted from the foot of the starboard supporting-column to the under side of the cylinder. There remained now the port, or condenser-column, which, though not so badly cracked as its fellow, had also been strengthened in four places with boiler-plate patches, but needed struts. They took away the main stanchions of the bridge for that work, and, crazy with toil, did not see till all was in place that the rounded bars of iron must be flattened from top to bottom to allow the air-pump levers to clear them. It was Wardrop's oversight, and he wept bitterly before the men as he gave the order to unbolt the struts and flatten them with

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hammer and the flame. Now the broken engine was under-pinned firmly, and they took away the wooden shores from under the cylinders, and gave them to the robbed bridge, thanking God for even half a day's work on gentle, kindly wood instead of the iron that had entered into their souls. Eight months in the back country among the leeches, at a temperature of 85 degrees moist, is very bad for the nerves.

They had kept the hardest work to the last, as boys save Latin prose, and, worn though they were, Mr. Wardrop did not dare to give them rest. The piston-rod and connecting-rod were to be straightened, and this was a job for a regular dockyard with every appliance. They fell to it, cheered by a little chalk-showing of work done and time consumed which Mr. Wardrop wrote up on the engine-room bulk-head. Fifteen days had gone—fifteen days of killing labour—and there was hope before them.

It is curious that no man knows how the rods were straightened. The crew of the 'Haliotis' remember that week very dimly, as a fever patient remembers the delirium of a long night. There were fires everywhere, they say; the whole ship was one consuming furnace, and the hammers were never still. Now, there could not have been more than one fire at the most, for Mr. Wardrop distinctly recalls that no straightening was done except under his own eye. They remember, too, that for many years voices gave orders which they obeyed with their bodies, but their minds were abroad on all the seas. It seems to them that they stood through days and nights slowly sliding a bar backwards and forwards through a white glow that was part of the ship. They remember an intolerable noise in their burn-

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ing heads from the walls of the stoke-hole, and they remember being savagely beaten by men whose eyes seemed asleep. When their shift was over they would draw straight lines in the air, anxiously and repeatedly, and would question one another in their sleep, crying, 'Is she straight?'

At last—they do not remember whether this was by day or by night—Mr. Wardrop began to dance clumsily, and wept the while; and they too danced and wept, and went to sleep twitching all over; and when they woke, men said that the rods were straightened, and no one did any work for two days, but lay on the decks and ate fruit. Mr. Wardrop would go below from time to time, and pat the two rods where they lay, and they heard him singing hymns.

Then his trouble of mind went from him, and at the end of the third day's idleness he made a drawing in chalk upon the deck, with letters of the alphabet at the angles. He pointed out that, though the piston-rod was more or less straight, the piston-rod cross-head—the thing that had been jammed sideways in the guides—had been badly strained, and had cracked the lower end of the piston-rod. He was going to forge and shrink a wrought-iron collar on the neck of the piston-rod where it joined the cross-head, and from the collar he would bolt a Y-shaped piece of iron whose lower arms should be bolted into the cross-head. If anything more were needed, they could use up the last of the boiler-plate.

So the forges were lit again, and men burned their bodies, but hardly felt the pain. The finished connection was not beautiful, but it seemed strong enough—at least, as strong as the rest of the machinery; and with

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that job their labours came to an end. All that remained was to connect up the engines, and to get food and water. The skipper and four men dealt with the Malay boat-builder—by night chiefly; it was no time to haggle over the price of sago and dried fish. The others stayed aboard and replaced piston, piston-rod, cylinder-cover, cross-head, and bolts, with the aid of the faithful donkey-engine. The cylinder-cover was hardly steam-proof, and the eye of science might have seen in the connecting-rod a flexure something like that of a Christmas-tree candle which has melted and been straightened by hand over a stove, but, as Mr. Wardrop said, 'She didn't hit anything.'

As soon as the last bolt was in place, men tumbled over one another in their anxiety to get to the hand turning-gear, the wheel and the worm, by which some engines can be moved when there is no steam aboard. They nearly wrenched off the wheel, but it was evident to the blindest eye that the engines stirred. They did not revolve in their orbits with any enthusiasm, as good machines should; indeed, they groaned not a little; but they moved over and came to rest in a way which proved that they still recognised man's hand. Then Mr. Wardrop sent his slaves into the darker bowels of the engine-room and the stoke-hole, and followed them with a flare-lamp. The boilers were sound, but would take no harm from a little scaling and cleaning. Mr. Wardrop would not have any one over-zealous, for he feared what the next stroke of the tool might show. 'The less we know about her now,' said he, 'the better for us all, I'm thinkin'. Ye'll understand me when I say that this is in no sense regular engineerin'.'

As his raiment, when he spoke, was his gray beard

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and uncut hair, they believed him. They did not ask too much of what they met, but polished and talloved and scraped it to a false brilliancy.

‘A lick of paint would make me easier in my mind,’ said Mr. Wardrop, plaintively. ‘I know half the condenser-tubes are started; and the propeller-shaftin’ ’s God knows how far out of the true, and we’ll need a new air-pump, an’ the main-steam leaks like a sieve, and there’s worse each way I look; but—paint’s like clothes to a man, an’ ours is near all gone.’

The skipper unearthed some stale ropy paint of the loathsome green that they used for the galleys of sailing-ships, and Mr. Wardrop spread it abroad lavishly to give the engines self-respect.

His own was returning day by day, for he wore his loin-cloth continuously; but the crew, having worked under orders, did not feel as he did. The completed work satisfied Mr. Wardrop. He would at the last have made shift to run to Singapore, and, gone home, without vengeance taken, to show his engines to his brethren in the craft; but the others and the captain forbade him. They had not yet recovered their self-respect.

‘It would be safer to make what ye might call a trial trip, but beggars mustn’t be choosers; an’ if the engines will go over to the hand gear, the probability—I’m only saying it’s a probability—the chance is that they’ll hold up when we put steam on her.’

‘How long will you take to get steam?’ said the skipper.

‘God knows! Four hours—a day—half a week. If I can raise sixty pound I’ll not complain.’

‘Be sure of her first; we can’t afford to go out half a mile, and break down.’

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‘My soul and body, man, we’re one continuous breakdown, fore an’ aft! We might fetch Singapore, though.’

‘We’ll break down at Pygang-Watai, where we can do good,’ was the answer, in a voice that did not allow argument. ‘She’s my boat, and—I’ve had eight months to think in.’

No man saw the ‘Haliotis’ depart, though many heard her. She left at two in the morning, having cut her moorings, and it was none of her crew’s pleasure that the engines should strike up a thundering half-seas-over chanty that echoed among the hills. Mr. Wardrop wiped away a tear as he listened to the new song.

‘She’s gibberin’—she’s just gibberin’,’ he whimpered. ‘Yon’s the voice of a maniac.’

And if engines have any soul, as their masters believe, he was quite right. There were outcries and clamours, sobs and bursts of chattering laughter, silences where the trained ear yearned for the clear note, and torturing reduplications where there should have been one deep voice. Down the screw-shaft ran murmurs and warnings, while a heart-diseased flutter without told that the propeller needed re-keying.

‘How does she make it?’ said the skipper.

‘She moves, but—but she’s breakin’ my heart. The sooner we’re at Pygang-Watai, the better. She’s mad, and we’re waking the town.’

‘Is she at all near safe?’

‘What do I care how safe she is! She’s mad. Hear that, now! To be sure, nothing’s hittin’ anything, and the bearin’s are fairly cool, but—can ye not hear?’

‘If she goes,’ said the skipper, ‘I don’t care a curse. And she’s my boat, too.’

She went, trailing a fathom of weed behind her.

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From a slow two knots an hour she crawled up to a triumphant four. Anything beyond that made the struts quiver dangerously, and filled the engine-room with steam. Morning showed her out of sight of land, and there was a visible ripple under her bows; but she complained bitterly in her bowels, and, as though the noise had called it, there shot along across the purple sea a swift, dark proa, hawk-like and curious, which presently ranged alongside and wished to know if the 'Haliotis' were helpless. Ships, even the steamers of the white men, had been known to break down in those waters, and the honest Malay and Javanese traders would sometimes aid them in their own peculiar way. But this ship was not full of lady passengers and well-dressed officers. Men, white, naked and savage, swarmed down her sides—some with red-hot iron bars and others with large hammers—threw themselves upon those innocent inquiring strangers, and, before any man could say what had happened, were in full possession of the proa, while the lawful owners bobbed in the water overside. Half an hour later the proa's cargo of sago and tripang, as well as a doubtful-minded compass, was in the 'Haliotis.' The two huge triangular mat sails, with their seventy-foot yards, had followed the cargo, and were being fitted to the stripped masts of the steamer.

They rose, they swelled, they filled, and the empty steamer visibly laid over as the wind took them. They gave her nearly three knots an hour, and what better could men ask? But if she had been forlorn before, this new purchase made her horrible to see. Imagine a respectable charwoman in the tights of a ballet-dancer rolling drunk along the streets, and you will come to

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some faint notion of the appearance of that nine-hundred-ton well-decked once schooner-rigged cargo-boat as she staggered under her new help, shouting and raving across the deep. With steam and sail that marvellous voyage continued; and the bright-eyed crew looked over the rail, desolate, unkempt, unshorn, shamelessly clothed—beyond the decencies.

At the end of the third week she sighted the island of Pygang-Watai, whose harbour is the turning-point of a pearling sea-patrol. Here the gunboats stay for a week ere they retrace their line. There is no village at Pygang-Watai, only a stream of water, some palms, and a harbour safe to rest in till the first violence of the south-east monsoon has blown itself out. They opened up the low coral beach, with its mound of whitewashed coal ready for supply, the deserted huts for the sailors, and the flagless flagstaff.

Next day there was no 'Haliotis'—only a little proa rocking in the warm rain at the mouth of the harbour, whose crew watched with hungry eyes the smoke of a gunboat on the horizon.

Months afterwards there were a few lines in an English newspaper to the effect that some gunboat of some foreign Power had broken her back at the mouth of some far-away harbour by running at full speed into a sunken wreck.

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

(1895)

PART I

I have done one braver thing
Than all the worthies did;
And yet a braver thence doth spring,
Which is to keep that hid.

‘The Undertaking.’

‘IS it officially declared yet?’

‘They’ve gone as far as to admit extreme local scarcity, and they’ve started relief-works in one or two districts, the paper says.’

‘That means it will be declared as soon as they can make sure of the men and the rolling-stock. Shouldn’t wonder if it were as bad as the Big Famine.’

‘Can’t be,’ said Scott, turning a little in the long cane chair. ‘We’ve had fifteen-anna crops in the north, and Bombay and Bengal report more than they know what to do with. They’ll be able to check it before it gets out of hand. It will only be local.’

Martyn picked up the ‘Pioneer’ from the table, read through the telegrams once more, and put up his feet on the chair-rests. It was a hot, dark, breathless evening, heavy with the smell of the newly-watered Mall. The flowers in the Club gardens were dead and black on

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their stalks, the little lotus-pond was a circle of caked mud, and the tamarisk-trees were white with the dust of days. Most of the men were at the bandstand in the public gardens—from the Club veranda you could hear the native Police band hammering stale waltzes—or on the polo-ground or in the high-walled fives-court, hotter than a Dutch oven. Half a dozen grooms, squatted at the heads of their ponies, waited their masters' return. From time to time a man would ride at a foot-pace into the Club compound, and listlessly loaf over to the whitewashed barracks beside the main building. These were supposed to be chambers. Men lived in them, meeting the same faces night after night at dinner, and drawing out their office-work till the latest possible hour, that they might escape that doleful company.

'What are you going to do?' said Martyn, with a yawn. 'Let's have a swim before dinner.'

'Water's hot,' said Scott. 'I was at the bath to-day.'

'Play you game o' billiards—fifty up.'

'It's a hundred and five in the hall now. Sit still and don't be so abominably energetic.'

A grunting camel swung up to the porch, his badged and belted rider fumbling a leather pouch.

'Kubber-kargaz—ki—yektraaa,' the man whined, handing down the newspaper extra—a slip printed on one side only, and damp from the press. It was pinned on the green baize-board, between notices of ponies for sale and fox-terriers missing.

Martyn rose lazily, read it, and whistled. 'It's declared!' he cried. 'One, two, three—eight districts go under the operations of the Famine Code ek dum. They've put Jimmy Hawkins in charge.'

'Good business!' said Scott, with the first sign of

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interest he had shown. 'When in doubt hire a Punjabi. I worked under Jimmy when I first came out and he belonged to the Punjab. He has more bundobust than most men.'

'Jimmy's a Jubilee Knight now,' said Martyn. 'He was a good chap, even though he is a thrice-born civilian and went to the Benighted Presidency. What unholy names these Madras districts rejoice in—all "ungas" or "rungas" or "pillays" or "polliums."' "

A dog-cart drove up, and a man entered, mopping his head. He was editor of the one daily paper at the capital of a province of twenty-five million natives and a few hundred white men, and as his staff was limited to himself and one assistant, his office hours ran variously from ten to twenty a day.

'Hi, Raines; you're supposed to know everything,' said Martyn, stopping him. 'How's this Madras "scarcity" going to turn out?'

'No one knows as yet. There's a message as long as your arm coming in on the telephone. I've left my cub to fill it out. Madras has owned she can't manage it alone, and Jimmy seems to have a free hand in getting all the men he needs. Arbuthnot's warned to hold himself in readiness.'

'"Badger" Arbuthnot?'

'The Peshawur chap. Yes, and the "Pi" wires that Ellis and Clay have been moved from the North-West already, and they've taken half a dozen Bombay men, too. It's pukka famine, by the looks of it.'

'They're nearer the scene of action than we are; but if it comes to indenting on the Punjab this early, there's more in this than meets the eye,' said Martyn.

'Here to-day and gone to-morrow. Didn't come to

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stay for ever,' said Scott, dropping one of Marryat's novels, and rising to his feet. 'Martyn, your sister's waiting for you.'

A rough gray horse was backing and shifting at the edge of the veranda, where the light of a kerosene-lamp fell on a brown calico habit and a white face under a gray felt hat.

'Right O,' said Martyn. 'I'm ready. Better come and dine with us if you've nothing to do, Scott. William, is there any dinner in the house?'

'I'll go home first and see,' was the rider's answer. 'You can drive him over—at eight, remember.'

Scott moved leisurely to his room, and changed into the evening-dress of the season and the country: spotless white linen from head to foot, with a broad silk cummerbund. Dinner at the Martyns' was a decided improvement on the goat-mutton, winey-tough fowl, and tinned entrees of the Club. But it was a great pity Martyn could not afford to send his sister to the Hills for the hot weather. As an Acting District Superintendent of Police, Martyn drew the magnificent pay of six hundred depreciated silver rupees a month, and his little four-roomed bungalow said just as much. There were the usual blue-and-white striped jail-made rugs on the uneven floor; the usual glass-studded Amritsar phulkaris draped to nails driven into the flaking whitewash of the walls; the usual half-dozen chairs that did not match, picked up at sales of dead men's effects; and the usual streaks of black grease where the leather punka-thong ran through the wall. It was as though everything had been unpacked the night before to be repacked next morning. Not a door in the house was true to its hinges. The little windows, fifteen feet up,

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were darkened with wasp-nests, and lizards hunted flies between the beams of the wood-ceiled roof. But all this was part of Scott's life. Thus did people live who had such an income; and in a land where each man's pay, age, and position are printed in a book, that all may read, it is hardly worth while to play at pretences in word or deed. Scott counted eight years' service in the Irrigation Department, and drew eight hundred rupees a month, on the understanding that if he served the State faithfully for another twenty-two years he could retire on a pension of some four hundred rupees a month. His working life, which had been spent chiefly under canvas or in temporary shelters where a man could sleep, eat, and write letters, was bound up with the opening and guarding of irrigation canals, the handling of two or three thousand workmen of all castes and creeds, and the payment of vast sums of coined silver. He had finished that spring, not without credit, the last section of the great Mosuhl Canal, and—much against his will, for he hated office work—had been sent in to serve during the hot weather on the accounts and supply side of the Department, with sole charge of the sweltering sub-office at the capital of the Province. Martyn knew this; William, his sister, knew it; and everybody knew it.

Scott knew, too, as well as the rest of the world, that Miss Martyn had come out to India four years before, to keep house for her brother, who, as every one, again, knew, had borrowed the money to pay for her passage, and that she ought, as all the world said, to have married long ago. Instead of this, she had refused some half a dozen subalterns, a civilian twenty years her senior, one major, and a man in the Indian Medical

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Department. This, too, was common property. She had 'stayed down three hot weathers,' as the saying is, because her brother was in debt and could not afford the expense of her keep at even a cheap hill-station. Therefore her face was white as bone, and in the centre of her forehead was a big silvery scar about the size of a shilling—the mark of a Delhi sore, which is the same as a 'Bagdad date.' This comes from drinking bad water, and slowly eats into the flesh till it is ripe enough to be burned out with acids.

None the less William had enjoyed herself hugely in her four years. Twice she had been nearly drowned while fording a river on horseback; once she had been run away with on a camel; had witnessed a midnight attack of thieves on her brother's camp; had seen justice administered, with long sticks, in the open under trees; could speak Urdu and even rough Punjabi with a fluency that was envied by her seniors; had altogether fallen out of the habit of writing to her aunts in England, or cutting the pages of the English magazines; had been through a very bad cholera year, seeing sights unfit to be told; and had wound up her experiences by six weeks of typhoid fever, during which her head had been shaved; and hoped to keep her twenty-third birthday that September. It is conceivable that her aunts would not have approved of a girl who never set foot on the ground if a horse were within hail; who rode to dances with a shawl thrown over her skirt; who wore her hair cropped and curling all over her head; who answered indifferently to the name of William or Bill; whose speech was heavy with the flowers of the vernacular; who could act in amateur theatricals, play on the banjo, rule eight servants and two horses, their accounts and their diseases,

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and look men slowly and deliberately between the eyes—yea, after they had proposed to her and been rejected.

‘I like men who do things,’ she had confided to a man in the Educational Department, who was teaching the sons of cloth merchants and dyers the beauty of Wordsworth’s ‘Excursion’ in annotated cram-books; and when he grew poetical, William explained that she ‘didn’t understand poetry very much; it made her head ache,’ and another broken heart took refuge at the Club. But it was all William’s fault. She delighted in hearing men talk of their own work, and that is the most fatal way of bringing a man to your feet.

Scott had known her more or less for some three years, meeting her, as a rule, under canvas when his camp and her brother’s joined for a day on the edge of the Indian Desert. He had danced with her several times at the big Christmas gatherings, when as many as five hundred white people came into the station; and he had always a great respect for her housekeeping and her dinners.

She looked more like a boy than ever when, after their meal, she sat, one foot tucked under her, on the leather camp-sofa, rolling cigarettes for her brother, her low forehead puckered beneath the dark curls as she twiddled the papers. She stuck out her rounded chin when the tobacco stayed in place, and, with a gesture as true as a school-boy’s throwing a stone, tossed the finished article across the room to Martyn, who caught it with one hand, and continued his talk with Scott. It was all ‘shop,’—canals and the policing of canals; the sins of villagers who stole more water than they had paid for, and the grosser sin of native constables who connived at the thefts; of the transplanting bodily of villages to newly irrigated ground, and of the coming fight

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with the desert in the south when the Provincial funds should warrant the opening of the long-surveyed Luni Protective Canal System. And Scott spoke openly of his great desire to be put on one particular section of the work where he knew the land and the people, and Martyn sighed for a billet in the Himalayan foot-hills, and spoke his mind of his superiors, and William rolled cigarettes and said nothing, but smiled gravely on her brother because he was happy.

At ten Scott's horse came to the door, and the evening was ended.

The lights of the two low bungalows in which the daily paper was printed showed bright across the road. It was too early to try to find sleep, and Scott drifted over to the editor. Raines, stripped to the waist like a sailor at a gun, lay in a long chair, waiting for night telegrams. He had a theory that if a man did not stay by his work all day and most of the night he laid himself open to fever; so he ate and slept among his files.

'Can you do it?' he said drowsily. 'I didn't mean to bring you over.'

'About what? I've been dining at the Martyns'.'

'The famine, of course. Martyn's warned for it, too. They're taking men where they can find 'em. I sent a note to you at the Club just now, asking if you could do us a letter once a week from the south—between two and three columns, say. Nothing sensational, of course, but just plain facts about who is doing what, and so forth. Our regular rates—ten rupees a column.'

'Sorry, but it's out of my line,' Scott answered, staring absently at the map of India on the wall. 'It's rough on Martyn—very. Wonder what he'll do with his sister. Wonder what the deuce they'll do with me.'

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I've no famine experience. This is the first I've heard of it. Am I ordered?'

'Oh, yes. Here's the wire. They'll put you on relief-works,' Raines went on, 'with a horde of Madrassis dying like flies; one native apothecary and half a pint of cholera-mixture among the ten thousand of you. It comes of your being idle for the moment. Every man who isn't doing two men's work seems to have been called upon. Hawkins evidently believes in Punjabis. It's going to be quite as bad as anything they have had in the last ten years.'

'It's all in the day's work, worse luck. I suppose I shall get my orders officially some time to-morrow. I'm glad I happened to drop in. Better go and pack my kit now. Who relieves me here—do you know?'

Raines turned over a sheaf of telegrams. 'McEuan,' said he, 'from Murree.'

Scott chuckled. 'He thought he was going to be cool all summer. He'll be very sick about this. Well, no good talking. 'Night.'

Two hours later, Scott, with a clear conscience, laid himself down to rest on a string cot in a bare room. Two worn bullock-trunks, a leather water-bottle, a tin ice-box, and his pet saddle sewed up in sacking were piled at the door, and the Club secretary's receipt for last month's bill was under his pillow. His orders came next morning, and with them an unofficial telegram from Sir James Hawkins, who did not forget good men, bidding him report himself with all speed at some unpronounceable place fifteen hundred miles to the south, for the famine was sore in the land, and white men were needed.

A pink and fattish youth arrived in the red-hot noon-

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day, whimpering a little at fate and famines, which never allowed any one three months' peace. He was Scott's successor—another cog in the machinery, moved forward behind his fellow, whose services, as the official announcement ran, 'were placed at the disposal of the Madras Government for famine duty until further orders.' Scott handed over the funds in his charge, showed him the coolest corner in the office, warned him against excess of zeal, and, as twilight fell, departed from the Club in a hired carriage with his faithful body-servant, Faiz Ullah, and a mound of disordered baggage atop, to catch the Southern Mail at the loopholed and bastioned railway-station. The heat from the thick brick walls struck him across the face as if it had been a hot towel, and he reflected that there were at least five nights and four days of travel before him. Faiz Ullah, used to the chances of service, plunged into the crowd on the stone platform, while Scott, a black cheroot between his teeth, waited till his compartment should be set away. A dozen native policemen, with their rifles and bundles, shouldered into the press of Punjabi farmers, Sikh craftsmen, and greasy-locked Afreedee pedlars, escorting with all pomp Martyn's uniform-case, water-bottles, ice-box, and bedding-roll. They saw Faiz Ullah's lifted hand, and steered for it.

'My Sahib and your Sahib,' said Faiz Ullah to Martyn's man, 'will travel together. Thou and I, O brother, will thus secure the servants' places close by, and because of our masters' authority none will dare to disturb us.'

When Faiz Ullah reported all things ready, Scott settled down coatless and bootless on the broad leather-covered bunk. The heat under the iron-arched roof of

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the station might have been anything over a hundred degrees. At the last moment Martyn entered, hot and dripping.

'Don't swear,' said Scott lazily; 'it's too late to change your carriage; and we'll divide the ice.'

'What are you doing here?' said the policeman.

'Lent to the Madras Government, same as you. By Jove, it's a bender of a night! Are you taking any of your men down?'

'A dozen. Suppose I'll have to superintend relief distributions. Didn't know you were under orders too.'

'I didn't till after I left you last night. Raines had the news first. My orders came this morning. McEuan relieved me at four, and I got off at once. Shouldn't wonder if it wouldn't be a good thing—this famine—if we come through it alive.'

'Jimmy ought to put you and me to work together,' said Martyn; and then, after a pause: 'My sister's here.'

'Good business,' said Scott, heartily. 'Going to get off at Umballa, I suppose, and go up to Simla. Who'll she stay with there?'

'No-o; that's just the trouble of it. She's going down with me.'

Scott sat bolt upright under the oil lamp as the train jolted past Tarn-Taran station. 'What! You don't mean you couldn't afford—'

'Oh, I'd have scraped up the money somehow.'

'You might have come to me, to begin with,' said Scott, stiffly; 'we aren't altogether strangers.'

'Well, you needn't be stuffy about it. I might, but—you don't know my sister. I've been explaining and exhorting and entreating and commanding and all the

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rest of it all day—lost my temper since seven this morning, and haven't got it back yet—but she wouldn't hear of any compromise. A woman's entitled to travel with her husband if she wants to, and William says she's on the same footing. You see, we've been together all our lives, more or less, since my people died. It isn't as if she were an ordinary sister.'

'All the sisters I've ever heard of would have stayed where they were well off.'

'She's as clever as a man, confound her,' Martyn went on. 'She broke up the bungalow over my head while I was talking at her. 'Settled the whole subchiz in three hours—servants, horses, and all. I didn't get my orders till nine.'

'Jimmy Hawkins won't be pleased,' said Scott. 'A famine's no place for a woman.'

'Mrs. Jim—I mean Lady Jim's in camp with him. At any rate, she says she will look after my sister. William wired down to her on her own responsibility, asking if she could come, and knocked the ground from under me by showing me her answer.'

Scott laughed aloud. 'If she can do that she can take care of herself, and Mrs. Jim won't let her run into any mischief. There aren't many women, sisters or wives, who would walk into a famine with their eyes open. It isn't as if she didn't know what these things mean. She was through the Jaloo cholera last year.'

The train stopped at Amritsar, and Scott went back to the ladies' compartment, immediately behind their carriage. William, a cloth riding-cap on her curls, nodded affably.

'Come in and have some tea,' she said. 'Best thing in the world for heat-apoplexy.'

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‘Do I look as if I were going to have heat-apoplexy?’

‘Never can tell,’ said William, wisely. ‘It’s always best to be ready.’

She had arranged her belongings with the knowledge of an old campaigner. A felt-covered water-bottle hung in the draught of one of the shuttered windows; a tea-set of Russian china, packed in a wadded basket, stood ready on the seat; and a travelling spirit-lamp was clamped against the woodwork above it.

William served them generously, in large cups, hot tea, which saves the veins of the neck from swelling inopportunely on a hot night. It was characteristic of the girl that, her plan of action once settled, she asked for no comments on it. Life with men who had a great deal of work to do, and very little time to do it in, had taught her the wisdom of effacing as well as of fending for herself. She did not by word or deed suggest that she would be useful, comforting, or beautiful in their travels, but continued about her business serenely: put the cups back without clatter when tea was ended, and made cigarettes for her guests.

‘This time last night,’ said Scott, ‘we didn’t expect—er—this kind of thing, did we?’

‘I’ve learned to expect anything,’ said William. ‘You know, in our service, we live at the end of the telegraph; but, of course, this ought to be a good thing for us all, departmentally—if we live.’

‘It knocks us out of the running in our own Province,’ Scott replied, with equal gravity. ‘I hoped to be put on the Luni Protective Works this cold weather; but there’s no saying how long the famine may keep us.’

‘Hardly beyond October, I should think,’ said Martyn. ‘It will be ended, one way or the other, then.’

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‘And we’ve nearly a week of this,’ said William. ‘Shan’t we be dusty when it’s over?’

For a night and a day they knew their surroundings; and for a night and a day, skirting the edge of the great Indian Desert on a narrow-gauge line, they remembered how in the days of their apprenticeship they had come by that road from Bombay. Then the languages in which the names of the stations were written changed, and they launched south into a foreign land, where the very smells were new. Many long and heavily-laden grain trains were in front of them, and they could feel the hand of Jimmy Hawkins from far off. They waited in extemporised sidings blocked by processions of empty trucks returning to the north, and were coupled on to slow, crawling trains, and dropped at midnight, Heaven knew where; but it was furiously hot; and they walked to and fro among sacks, and dogs howled.

Then they came to an India more strange to them than to the untravelled Englishman—the flat, red India of palm-tree, palmyra-palm, and rice, the India of the picture-books, of ‘Little Henry’ and His Bearer’—all dead and dry in the baking heat. They had left the incessant passenger-traffic of the north and west far and far behind them. Here the people crawled to the side of the train, holding their little ones in their arms; and a loaded truck would be left behind, men and women clustering round and above it like ants by spilled honey. Once in the twilight they saw on a dusty plain a regiment of little brown men, each bearing a body over his shoulder; and when the train stopped to leave yet another truck, they perceived that the burdens were not corpses, but only foodless folk picked up beside their dead oxen by a corps of Irregular troops. Now they

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met more white men, here one and there two, whose tents stood close to the line, and who came armed with written authorities and angry words to cut off a truck. They were too busy to do more than nod at Scott and Martyn, and stare curiously at William, who could do nothing except make tea, and watch how her men staved off the rush of wailing, walking skeletons, putting them down three at a time in heaps, with their own hands uncoupling the marked trucks, or taking receipts from the hollow-eyed, weary white men, who spoke another argot than theirs.

They ran out of ice, out of soda-water, and out of tea; for they were six days and seven nights on the road, and it seemed to them like seven times seven years.

At last, in a dry, hot dawn, in a land of death, lit by long red fires of railway sleepers, where they were burning the dead, they came to their destination, and were met by Jim Hawkins, the Head of the Famine, unshaven, unwashed, but cheery, and entirely in command of affairs.

Martyn, he decreed, then and there, was to live on trains till further orders; was to go back with empty trucks, filling them with starving people as he found them, and dropping them at a famine-camp on the edge of the Eight Districts. He would pick up supplies and return, and his constables would guard the loaded grain-cars, also picking up people, and would drop them at a camp a hundred miles south. Scott—Hawkins was very glad to see Scott again—would, that same hour, take charge of a convoy of bullock-carts, and would go south, feeding as he went, to yet another famine-camp, far from the rail, where he would leave his starving—there would be no lack of starving on the route—and wait for orders

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by telegraph. Generally, Scott was in all small things to do what he thought best.

William bit her underlip. There was no one in the wide world like her one brother, but Martyn's orders gave him no discretion. She came out, masked with dust from head to foot, a horseshoe wrinkle on her forehead, put here by much thinking during the past week, but as self-possessed as ever. Mrs. Jim—who should have been Lady Jim, but that no one remembered to call her aright—took possession of her with a little gasp.

‘Oh, I’m so glad you’re here,’ she almost sobbed. ‘You oughtn’t to, of course, but there—there isn’t another woman in the place, and we must help each other, you know; and we’ve all the wretched people and the little babies they are selling.’

‘I’ve seen some,’ said William.

‘Isn’t it ghastly? I’ve bought twenty; they’re in our camp; but won’t you have something to eat first? We’ve more than ten people can do here; and I’ve got a horse for you. Oh, I’m so glad you’ve come! You’re a Punjabi too, you know.’

‘Steady, Lizzie,’ said Hawkins, over his shoulder. ‘We’ll look after you, Miss Martyn. Sorry I can’t ask you to breakfast, Martyn. You’ll have to eat as you go. Leave two of your men to help Scott. These poor devils can’t stand up to load carts. Saunders’ (this to the engine-driver, half asleep in the cab), ‘back down and get those empties away. You’ve “line clear” to Anundrapillay; they’ll give you orders north of that. Scott, load up your carts from that B. P. P. truck, and be off as soon as you can. The Eurasian in the pink shirt is your interpreter and guide. You’ll find an apothecary of sorts tied to the yoke of the second wag-

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gon. He's been trying to bolt; you'll have to look after him. Lizzie, drive Miss Martyn to camp, and tell them to send the red horse down here for me.'

Scott, with Faiz Ullah and two policemen, was already busy on the carts, backing them up to the truck and unbolting the sideboards quietly, while the others pitched in the bags of millet and wheat. Hawkins watched him for as long as it took to fill one cart.

'That's a good man,' he said. 'If all goes well I shall work him—hard.' This was Jim Hawkins's notion of the highest compliment one human being could pay another.

An hour later Scott was under way; the apothecary threatening him with the penalties of the law for that he, a member of the Subordinate Medical Department, had been coerced and bound against his will and all laws governing the liberty of the subject; the pink-shirted Eurasian begging leave to see his mother, who happened to be dying some three miles away: 'Only verree, verree short leave of absence, and will presently return, sar—'; the two constables, armed with staves, bringing up the rear; and Faiz Ullah, a Muhammedan's contempt for all Hindoos and foreigners in every line of his face, explaining to the drivers that though Scott Sahib was a man to be feared on all fours, he, Faiz Ullah, was Authority itself.

The procession creaked past Hawkins's camp—three stained tents under a clump of dead trees; behind them the famine-shed where a crowd of hopeless ones tossed their arms around the cooking-kettles.

'Wish to Heaven William had kept out of it,' said Scott to himself, after a glance. 'We'll have cholera, sure as a gun, when the Rains come.'

But William seemed to have taken kindly to the oper-

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ations of the Famine Code, which, when famine is declared, supersede the workings of the ordinary law. Scott saw her, the centre of a mob of weeping women, in a calico riding-habit and a blue-gray felt hat with a gold puggaree.

‘I want fifty rupees, please. I forgot to ask Jack before he went away. Can you lend it me? It’s for condensed milk for the babies,’ said she.

Scott took the money from his belt, and handed it over without a word. ‘For goodness sake take care of yourself,’ he said.

‘Oh, I shall be all right. We ought to get the milk in two days. By the way, the orders are, I was to tell you, that you’re to take one of Sir Jim’s horses. There’s a gray Cabuli here that I thought would be just your style, so I’ve said you’d take him. Was that right?’

‘That’s awfully good of you. We can’t either of us talk much about style, I’m afraid.’

Scott was in a weather-stained drill shooting-kit, very white at the seams and a little frayed at the wrists. William regarded him thoughtfully, from his pith helmet to his greased ankle-boots. ‘You look very nice, I think. Are you sure you’ve everything you’ll need—quinine, chlorodyne, and so on?’

‘Think so,’ said Scott, patting three or four of his shooting-pockets as the horse was led up, and he mounted and rode alongside his convoy.

‘Good-bye,’ he cried.

‘Good-bye, and good luck,’ said William. ‘I’m awfully obliged for the money.’ She turned on a spurred heel and disappeared into the tent, while the carts pushed on past the famine-sheds, past the roaring lines of the thick, fat fires, down to the baked Gehenna of the South.

PART II

So let us melt and make no noise,
No tear-floods nor sigh-tempests move;
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.

‘A Valediction.’

IT was punishing work, even though he travelled by night and camped by day; but within the limits of his vision there was no man whom Scott could call master. He was as free as Jimmy Hawkins—freer, in fact, for the Government held the Head of the Famine tied neatly to a telegraph-wire, and if Jimmy had ever regarded telegrams seriously, the death-rate of that famine would have been much higher than it was.

At the end of a few days' crawling Scott learned something of the size of the India which he served; and it astonished him. His carts, as you know, were loaded with wheat, millet, and barley, good food-grains needing only a little grinding. But the people to whom he brought the life-giving stuffs were rice-eaters. They knew how to hull rice in their mortars, but they knew nothing of the heavy stone querns of the North, and less of the material that the white man convoyed so laboriously. They clamoured for rice—unhusked paddy, such as they were accustomed to—and, when they found that there was none, broke away weeping from

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the sides of the cart. What was the use of these strange hard grains that choked their throats? They would die. And then and there were many of them kept their word. Others took their allowance, and bartered enough millet to feed a man through a week for a few handfuls of rotten rice saved by some less unfortunate. A few put their shares into the rice-mortars, pounded it, and made a paste with foul water, but they were very few. Scott understood dimly that many people in the India of the South ate rice, as a rule, but he had spent his service in a grain Province, had seldom seen rice in the blade or the ear, and least of all would have believed that, in time of deadly need, men would die at arm's length of plenty, sooner than touch food they did not know. In vain the interpreters interpreted; in vain his two policemen showed by vigorous pantomime what should be done. The starving crept away to their bark and weeds, grubs, leaves, and clay, and left the open sacks untouched. But sometimes the women laid their phantoms of children at Scott's feet, looking back as they staggered away.

Faiz Ullah opined it was the will of God that these foreigners should die, and therefore it remained only to give orders to burn the dead. None the less there was no reason why the Sahib should lack his comforts, and Faiz Ullah, a campaigner of experience, had picked up a few lean goats and had added them to the procession. That they might give milk for the morning meal, he was feeding them on the good grain that these imbeciles rejected. 'Yes,' said Faiz Ullah; 'if the Sahib thought fit, a little milk might be given to some of the babies'; but, as the Sahib well knew, babies were cheap, and, for his own part, Faiz Ullah held that there was no

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Government order as to babies. Scott spoke forcefully to Faiz Ullah and the two policemen, and bade them capture goats where they could find them. This they most joyfully did, for it was a recreation, and many ownerless goats were driven in. Once fed, the poor brutes were willing enough to follow the carts, and a few days' good food—food such as human beings died for the lack of—set them in milk again.

'But I am no goatherd,' said Faiz Ullah. 'It is against my izzat [my honour].'

'When we cross the Bias River again we will talk of izzat,' Scott replied. 'Till that day thou and the policemen shall be sweepers to the camp, if I give the order.'

'Thus, then, it is done,' grunted Faiz Ullah, 'if the Sahib will have it so'; and he showed how a goat should be milked, while Scott stood over him.

'Now we will feed them,' said Scott; 'thrice a day we will feed them'; and he bowed his back to the milking, and took a horrible cramp.

When you have to keep connection unbroken between a restless mother of kids and a baby who is at the point of death, you suffer in all your system. But the babies were fed. Morning, noon and evening Scott would solemnly lift them out one by one from their nest of gunny-bags under the cart-tilts. There were always many who could do no more than breathe, and the milk was dropped into their toothless mouths drop by drop, with due pauses when they choked. Each morning, too, the goats were fed; and since they would straggle without a leader, and since the natives were hirelings, Scott was forced to give up riding, and pace slowly at the head of his flocks, accommodating his step to their weak-

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nesses. All this was sufficiently absurd, and he felt the absurdity keenly; but at least he was saving life, and when the women saw that their children did not die, they made shift to eat a little of the strange foods, and crawled after the carts, blessing the master of the goats.

‘Give the women something to live for,’ said Scott to himself, as he sneezed in the dust of a hundred little feet, ‘and they’ll hang on somehow. But this beats William’s condensed-milk trick all to pieces. I shall never live it down, though.’

He reached his destination very slowly, found that a rice-ship had come in from Burmah, and that stores of paddy were available; found also an overworked Englishman in charge of the shed, and, loading the carts, set back to cover the ground he had already passed. He left some of the children and half his goats at the famine-shed. For this he was not thanked by the Englishman, who had already more stray babies than he knew what to do with. Scott’s back was suppld to stooping now, and he went on with his wayside ministrations in addition to distributing the paddy. More babies and more goats were added unto him; but now some of the babies wore rags, and beads round their wrists or necks. ‘That,’ said the interpreter, as though Scott did not know, ‘signifies that their mothers hope in eventual contingency to resume them offeeciially.’

‘The sooner the better,’ said Scott; but at the same time he marked, with the pride of ownership, how this or that little Ramasawmy was putting on flesh like a bantam. As the paddy-carts were emptied he headed for Hawkins’s camp by the railway, timing his arrival to fit in with the dinner-hour, for it was long since he had eaten at a cloth. He had no desire to make any

dramatic entry, but an accident of the sunset ordered it that, when he had taken off his helmet to get the evening breeze, the low light should fall across his forehead, and he could not see what was before him; while one waiting at the tent door beheld, with new eyes, a young man, beautiful as Paris, a god in a halo of golden dust, walking slowly at the head of his flocks, while at his knee ran small naked Cupids. But she laughed—William in a slate-coloured blouse, laughed consumedly till Scott, putting the best face he could upon the matter, halted his armies and bade her admire the kindergarten. It was an unseemly sight, but the proprieties had been left ages ago, with the tea-party at Amritsar Station, fifteen hundred miles to the northward.

‘They are coming on nicely,’ said William. ‘We’ve only five-and-twenty here now. The women are beginning to take them away again.’

‘Are you in charge of the babies, then?’

‘Yes—Mrs. Jim and I. We didn’t think of goats, though. We’ve been trying condensed milk and water.’

‘Any losses?’

‘More than I care to think of,’ said William, with a shudder. ‘And you?’

Scott said nothing. There had been many little burials along his route—many mothers who had wept when they did not find again the children they had trusted to the care of the Government.

Then Hawkins came out carrying a razor, at which Scott looked hungrily, for he had a beard that he did not love. And when they sat down to dinner in the tent he told his tale in few words, as it might have been an official report. Mrs. Jim snuffled from time to time, and Jim bowed his head judicially; but William’s gray

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eyes were on the clean-shaven face, and it was to her that Scott seemed to speak.

‘Good for the Pauper Province!’ said William, her chin in her hand, as she leaned forward among the wine-glasses. Her cheeks had fallen in, and the scar on her forehead was more prominent than ever, but the well-turned neck rose roundly as a column from the ruffle of the blouse which was the accepted evening-dress in camp.

‘It was awfully absurd at times,’ said Scott. ‘You see I didn’t know much about milking or babies. They’ll chaff my head off, if the tale goes north.’

‘Let ’em,’ said William, haughtily. ‘We’ve all done coolie-work since we came. I know Jack has.’ This was to Hawkins’s address, and the big man smiled blandly.

‘Your brother’s a highly efficient officer, William,’ said he, ‘and I’ve done him the honour of treating him as he deserves. Remember, I write the confidential reports.’

‘Then you must say that William’s worth her weight in gold,’ said Mrs. Jim. ‘I don’t know what we should have done without her. She has been everything to us.’ She dropped her hand upon William’s, which was rough with much handling of reins, and William patted it softly. Jim beamed on the company. Things were going well with his world. Three of his more grossly incompetent men had died, and their places had been filled by their betters. Every day brought the rains nearer. They had put out the famine in five of the Eight Districts, and, after all, the death-rate had not been too heavy—things considered. He looked Scott over carefully, as an ogre looks over a man, and rejoiced in his thews and iron-hard condition.

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'He's just the least bit in the world tucked up,' said Jim to himself, 'but he can do two men's work yet.' Then he was aware that Mrs. Jim was telegraphing to him, and according to the domestic code the message ran: 'A clear case. Look at them!'

He looked and listened. All that William was saying was: 'What can you expect of a country where they call a bhistee [a water-carrier] a tunni-cutch?' and all that Scott answered was: 'I shall be precious glad to get back to the Club. Save me a dance at the Christmas ball, won't you?'

'It's a far cry from here to the Lawrence Hall,' said Jim. 'Better turn in early, Scott. It's paddy-carts to-morrow; you'll begin loading at five.'

'Aren't you going to give Mr. Scott one day's rest?'

'Wish I could, Lizzie. 'Fraid I can't. As long as he can stand up we must use him.'

'Well, I've had one Europe evening, at least. . . . By Jove, I'd nearly forgotten! What do I do about those babies of mine?'

'Leave them here,' said William—'we are in charge of that—and as many goats as you can spare. I must learn how to milk now.'

'If you care to get up early enough to-morrow I'll show you. I have to milk, you see; and, by the way, half of 'em have beads and things round their necks. You must be careful not to take 'em off, in case the mothers turn up.'

'You forget I've had some experience here.'

'I hope to goodness you won't overdo.' Scott's voice was unguarded.

'I'll take care of her,' said Mrs. Jim, telegraphing hundred-word messages as she carried William off, while

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Jim gave Scott his orders for the coming campaign. It was very late—nearly nine o'clock.

'Jim, you're a brute,' said his wife, that night; and the Head of the Famine chuckled.

'Not a bit of it, dear. I remember doing the first Jandiala Settlement for the sake of a girl in a crinoline; and she was slender, Lizzie. I've never done as good a piece of work since. He'll work like a demon.'

'But you might have given him one day.'

'And let things come to a head now? No, dear; it's their happiest time.'

'I don't believe either of the dears know what's the matter with them. Isn't it beautiful? Isn't it lovely?'

'Getting up at three to learn to milk, bless her heart! Ye gods, why must we grow old and fat?'

'She's a darling. She has done more work under me—'

'Under you! The day after she came she was in charge and you were her subordinate, and you've stayed there ever since. She manages you almost as well as you manage me.'

'She doesn't, and that's why I love her. She's as direct as a man—as her brother.'

'Her brother's weaker than she is. He's always coming to me for orders; but he's honest, and a glutton for work. I confess I'm rather fond of William, and if I had a daughter—'

The talk ended there. Far away in the Derajat was a child's grave more than twenty years old, and neither Jim nor his wife spoke of it any more.

'All the same, you're responsible,' Jim added, after a moment's silence.

'Bless 'em!' said Mrs. Jim sleepily.

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Before the stars paled, Scott, who slept in an empty cart, waked and went about his work in silence; it seemed at that hour unkind to rouse Faiz Ullah and the interpreter. His head being close to the ground, he did not hear William till she stood over him in the dingy old riding-habit, her eyes still heavy with sleep, a cup of tea and a piece of toast in her hands. There was a baby on the ground, squirming on a piece of blanket, and a six-year-old child peered over Scott's shoulder.

'Hai, you little rip,' said Scott, 'how the deuce do you expect to get your rations if you aren't quiet?'

A cool white hand steadied the brat, who forthwith choked as the milk gurgled into his mouth.

'Mornin',' said the milker. 'You've no notion how these little fellows can wriggle.'

'Oh yes, I have.' She whispered, because the world was asleep. 'Only I feed them with a spoon or a rag. Yours are fatter than mine. . . . And you've been doing this day after day, twice a day?' The voice was almost lost.

'Yes; it was absurd. Now you try,' he said, giving place to the girl. 'Look out! A goat's not a cow.'

The goat protested against the amateur, and there was a scuffle, in which Scott snatched up the baby. Then it was all to do over again, and William laughed softly and merrily. She managed, however, to feed two babies, and a third.

'Don't the little beggars take it well!' said Scott. 'I trained 'em.'

They were very busy and interested, when, lo! it was broad daylight, and before they knew, the camp was awake, and they kneeled among the goats, surprised by the day, both flushed to the temples. Yet all the round

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world rolling up out of the darkness might have heard and seen all that had passed between them.

‘Oh,’ said William, unsteadily, snatching up the tea and toast. ‘I had this made for you. It’s stone-cold now. I thought you mightn’t have anything ready so early. Better not drink it. It’s—it’s stone-cold.’

‘That’s awfully kind of you. It’s just right. It’s awfully good of you, really. I’ll leave my kids and goats with you and Mrs. Jim; and, of course, any one in camp can show you about the milking.’

‘Of course,’ said William; and she grew pinker and pinker and statelier and more stately, as she strode back to her tent, fanning herself vigorously with the saucer.

There were shrill lamentations through the camp when the elder children saw their nurse move off without them. Faiz Ullah unbent so far as to jest with the policemen, and Scott turned purple with shame because Hawkins, already in the saddle, roared.

A child escaped from the care of Mrs. Jim, and, running like a rabbit, clung to Scott’s boot, William pursuing with long, easy strides.

‘I will not go—I will not go!’ shrieked the child, twining his feet round Scott’s ankle. ‘They will kill me here. I do not know these people.’

‘I say,’ said Scott, in broken Tamil, ‘I say, she will do you no harm. Go with her and be well fed.’

‘Come!’ said William, panting, with a wrathful glance at Scott, who stood helpless and, as it were, hamstrung.

‘Go back,’ said Scott quickly to William. ‘I’ll send the little chap over in a minute.’

The tone of authority had its effect, but in a way Scott did not exactly intend. The boy loosened his grasp,

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and said with gravity, 'I did not know the woman was thine. I will go.' Then he cried to his companions, a mob of three-, four-, and five-year-olds waiting on the success of his venture ere they stampeded: 'Go back and eat. It is our man's woman. She will obey his orders.'

Jim collapsed where he sat; Faiz Ullah and the two policemen grinned; and Scott's orders to the cartmen flew like hail.

'That is the custom of the Sahibs when truth is told in their presence,' said Faiz Ullah. 'The time comes that I must seek new service. Young wives, especially such as speak our language and have knowledge of the ways of the Police, make great trouble for honest butlers in the matter of weekly accounts.'

What William thought of it all she did not say, but when her brother, ten days later, came to camp for orders, and heard of Scott's performances, he said, laughing: 'Well, that settles it. He'll be Bakri Scott to the end of his days' ('Bakri,' in the northern vernacular, means a goat). 'What a lark! I'd have given a month's pay to have seen him nursing famine babies. I fed some with conjee [rice-water], but that was all right.'

'It's perfectly disgusting,' said his sister, with blazing eyes. 'A man does something like—like that—and all you other men think of is to give him an absurd nickname, and then you laugh and think it's funny.'

'Ah,' said Mrs. Jim, sympathetically.

'Well, you can't talk, William. You christened little Miss Demby the Button-quail last cold weather; you know you did. India's the land of nicknames.'

'That's different,' William replied. 'She was only a girl, and she hadn't done anything except walk like a

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quail, and she does. But it isn't fair to make fun of a man.'

'Scott won't care,' said Martyn. 'You can't get a rise out of old Scotty. I've been trying for eight years, and you've only known him for three. How does he look?'

'He looks very well,' said William, and went away with a flushed cheek. 'Bakri Scott, indeed!' Then she laughed to herself, for she knew the country of her service. 'But it will be Bakri all the same'; and she repeated it under her breath several times slowly, whispering it into favour.

When he returned to his duties on the railway, Martyn spread the name far and wide among his associates, so that Scott met it as he led his paddy-carts to war. The natives believed it to be some English title of honour, and the cart-drivers used it in all simplicity till Faiz Ullah, who did not approve of foreign japes, broke their heads. There was very little time for milking now, except at the big camps, where Jim had extended Scott's idea, and was feeding large flocks on the useless northern grains. Enough paddy had come into the Eight Districts to hold the people safe, if it were only distributed quickly; and for that purpose no one was better than the big Canal officer, who never lost his temper, never gave an unnecessary order, and never questioned an order given. Scott pressed on, saving his cattle, washing their galled necks daily, so that no time should be lost on the road; reported himself with his rice at the minor famine-sheds, unloaded, and went back light by forced night-march to the next distributing centre, to find Hawkins's unvarying telegram: 'Do it again.' And he did it again and again, and yet again,

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while Jim Hawkins, fifty miles away, marked off on a big map the tracks of his wheels gridironing the stricken lands. Others did well—Hawkins reported at the end that they all did well—but Scott was the most excellent, for he kept good coined rupees by him, and paid for his own cart-repairs on the spot, and ran to meet all sorts of unconsidered extras, trusting to be recouped later. Theoretically, the Government should have paid for every shoe and linchpin, for every hand employed in the loading; but Government vouchers cash themselves slowly, and intelligent and efficient clerks write at great length, contesting unauthorised expenditures of eight annas. The man who wishes to make his work a success must draw on his own bank-account of money or other things as he goes.

‘I told you he’d work,’ said Jimmy to his wife at the end of six weeks. ‘He’s been in sole charge of a couple of thousand men up north on the Mosuhl Canal for a year, and he gives one less trouble than young Martyn with his ten constables; and I’m morally certain—only Government doesn’t recognise moral obligations—that he’s spent about half his pay to grease his wheels. Look at this, Lizzie, for one week’s work! Forty miles in two days with twelve carts; two days’ halt building a famine-shed for young Rogers (Rogers ought to have built it himself, the idiot!). Then forty miles back again, loading six carts on the way, and distributing all Sunday. Then in the evening he pitches in a twenty-page demi-official to me, saying that the people where he is might be “advantageously employed on relief-work,” and suggesting that he put ’em to work on some broken-down old reservoir he’s discovered, so as to have a good water-supply when the Rains come. He thinks

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he can caulk the dam in a fortnight. Look at his marginal sketches—aren't they clear and good? I knew he was pukka, but I didn't know he was as pukka as this!'

'I must show these to William,' said Mrs. Jim. 'The child's wearing herself out among the babies.'

'Not more than you are, dear. Well, another two months ought to see us out of the wood. I'm sorry it's not in my power to recommend you for a V. C.'

William sat late in her tent that night, reading through page after page of the square handwriting, patting the sketches of proposed repairs to the reservoir, and wrinkling her eyebrows over the columns of figures of estimated water-supply.

'And he finds time to do all this,' she cried to herself, 'and . . . well, I also was present. I've saved one or two babies.'

She dreamed for the twentieth time of the god in the golden dust, and woke refreshed to feed loathsome black children, scores of them, wastrels picked up by the wayside, their bones almost breaking their skin, terrible and covered with sores.

Scott was not allowed to leave his cart-work, but his letter was duly forwarded to the Government, and he had the consolation, not rare in India, of knowing that another man was reaping where he had sown. That also was discipline profitable to the soul.

'He's much too good to waste on canals,' said Jimmy. 'Any one can oversee coolies. You needn't be angry, William: he can—but I need my pearl among bullock-drivers, and I've transferred him to the Khanda district, where he'll have it all to do over again. He should be marching now.'

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'He's not a coolie,' said William, furiously. 'He ought to be doing his regulation work.'

'He's the best man in his service, and that's saying a good deal; but if you must use razors to cut grindstones, why, I prefer the best cutlery.'

'Isn't it almost time we saw him again?' said Mrs. Jim. 'I'm sure the poor boy hasn't had a respectable meal for a month. He probably sits on a cart and eats sardines with his fingers.'

'All in good time, dear. Duty before decency—wasn't it Mr. Chucks said that?'

'No; it was Midshipman Easy,' William laughed. 'I sometimes wonder how it will feel to dance or listen to a band again, or sit under a roof. I can't believe that I ever wore a ball-frock in my life.'

'One minute,' said Mrs. Jim, who was thinking. 'If he goes to Khanda, he passes within five miles of us. Of course he'll ride in.'

'Oh no, he won't,' said William.

'How do you know, dear?'

'It'll take him off his work. He won't have time.'

'He'll make it,' said Mrs. Jim, with a twinkle.

'It depends on his own judgment. There's absolutely no reason why he shouldn't, if he thinks fit,' said Jim.

'He won't see fit,' William replied, without sorrow or emotion. 'It wouldn't be him if he did.'

'One certainly gets to know people rather well in times like these,' said Jim, drily; but William's face was serene as ever, and, as she prophesied, Scott did not appear.

The Rains fell at last, late, but heavily; and the dry, gashed earth was red mud, and servants killed snakes in

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the camp, where every one was weather-bound for a fortnight—all except Hawkins, who took horse and splashed about in the wet, rejoicing. Now the Government decreed that seed-grain should be distributed to the people as well as advances of money for the purchase of new oxen; and the white men were doubly worked for this new duty, while William skipped from brick to brick laid down on the trampled mud, and dosed her charges with warming medicines that made them rub their little round stomachs; and the milch-goats thrived on the rank grass. There was never a word from Scott in the Khanda district, away to the south-east, except the regular telegraphic report to Hawkins. The rude country roads had disappeared; his drivers were half mutinous; one of Martyn's loaned policemen had died of cholera; and Scott was taking thirty grains of quinine a day to fight the fever that comes if one works hard in heavy rain; but those were things he did not consider necessary to report. He was, as usual, working from a base of supplies on a railway line, to cover a circle of fifteen miles radius, and since full loads were impossible, he took quarter-loads, and toiled four times as hard by consequence; for he did not choose to risk an epidemic which might have grown uncontrollable by assembling villagers in thousands at the relief-sheds. It was cheaper to take Government bullocks, work them to death, and leave them to the crows in the wayside sloughs.

That was the time when eight years of clean living and hard condition told, though a man's head were ringing like a bell from the cinchona, and the earth swayed under his feet when he stood and under his bed when he slept. If Hawkins had seen fit to make him a bullock-driver, that, he thought, was entirely Hawkins's own

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affair. There were men in the North who would know what he had done; men of thirty years' service in his own department who would say that it was 'not half bad'; and above, immeasurably above all men of all grades, there was William in the thick of the fight, who would approve because she understood. He had so trained his mind that it would hold fast to the mechanical routine of the day, though his own voice sounded strange in his own ears, and his hands, when he wrote, grew large as pillows or small as peas at the end of his wrists. That steadfastness bore his body to the telegraph-office at the railway-station, and dictated a telegram to Hawkins, saying that the Khanda district was, in his judgment, now safe, and he 'waited further orders.'

The Madrassee telegraph-clerk did not approve of a large, gaunt man falling over him in a dead faint, not so much because of the weight, as because of the names and blows that Faiz Ullah dealt him when he found the body rolled under a bench. Then Faiz Ullah took blankets and quilts and coverlets where he found them, and lay down under them at his master's side, and bound his arms with a tent-rope, and filled him with a horrible stew of herbs, and set the policeman to fight him when he wished to escape from the intolerable heat of his coverings, and shut the door of the telegraph-office to keep out the curious for two nights and one day; and when a light engine came down the line, and Hawkins kicked in the door, Scott hailed him weakly, but in a natural voice, and Faiz Ullah stood back and took all the credit.

'For two nights, Heaven-born, he was pagal,' said Faiz Ullah. 'Look at my nose, and consider the eye of the policeman. He beat us with his bound hands; but

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we sat upon him, Heaven-born, and though his words were tez, we sweated him. Heaven-born, never has been such a sweat! He is weaker now than a child; but the fever has gone out of him, by the grace of God. There remains only my nose and the eye of the constabeel. Sahib, shall I ask for my dismissal because my Sahib has beaten me?' And Faiz Ullah laid his long thin hand carefully on Scott's chest to be sure that the fever was all gone, ere he went out to open tinned soups and discourage such as laughed at his swelled nose.

'The district's all right,' Scott whispered. 'It doesn't make any difference. You got my wire? I shall be fit in a week. 'Can't understand how it happened. I shall be fit in a few days.'

'You're coming into camp with us,' said Hawkins.

'But look here—but—'

'It's all over except the shouting. We shan't need you Punjabis any more. On my honour, we shan't. Martyn goes back in a few weeks; Arbuthnot's returned already; Ellis and Clay are putting the last touches to a new feeder-line the Government's built as relief-work. Morten's dead—he was a Bengal man, though; you wouldn't know him. 'Pon my word, you and Will—Miss Martyn—seem to have come through it as well as anybody.'

'Oh, how is she?' The voice went up and down as he spoke.

'She was in great form when I left her. The Roman Catholic Missions are adopting the unclaimed babies to turn them into little priests; the Basil Mission is taking some, and the mothers are taking the rest. You should hear the little beggars howl when they're sent away from William. She's pulled down a bit, but so are we

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all. Now, when do you suppose you'll be able to move?'

'I can't come into camp in this state. I won't,' he replied pettishly.

'Well, you are rather a sight, but from what I gathered there it seemed to me they'd be glad to see you under any conditions. I'll look over your work here, if you like, for a couple of days, and you can pull yourself together while Faiz Ullah feeds you up.'

Scott could walk dizzily by the time Hawkins's inspection was ended, and he flushed all over when Jim said of his work in the district that it was 'not half bad,' and volunteered, further, that he had considered Scott his right-hand man through the famine, and would feel it his duty to say as much officially.

So they came back by rail to the old camp; but there were no crowds near it, the long fires in the trenches were dead and black, and the famine-sheds stood almost empty.

'You see!' said Jim. 'There isn't much more for us to do. Better ride up and see the wife. They've pitched a tent for you. Dinner's at seven. I'll see you then.'

Riding at a foot-pace, Faiz Ullah by his stirrup, Scott came to William in the brown-calico riding-habit, sitting at the dining-tent door, her hands in her lap, white as ashes, thin and worn, with no lustre in her hair. There did not seem to be any Mrs. Jim on the horizon, and all that William could say was: 'My word, how pulled down you look!'

'I've had a touch of fever. You don't look very well yourself.'

'Oh, I'm fit enough. We've stamped it out. I suppose you know?'

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Scott nodded. 'We shall all be returned in a few weeks. Hawkins told me.'

'Before Christmas, Mrs. Jim says. Shan't you be glad to go back? I can smell the wood-smoke already'; William sniffed. 'We shall be in time for all the Christmas doings. I don't suppose even the Punjab Government would be base enough to transfer Jack till the new year?'

'It seems hundreds of years ago—the Punjab and all that—doesn't it? Are you glad you came?'

'Now it's all over, yes. It has been ghastly here. You know we had to sit still and do nothing, and Sir Jim was away so much.'

'Do nothing! How did you get on with the milking?'

'I managed it somehow—after you taught me.'

Then the talk stopped with an almost audible jar. Still no Mrs. Jim.

'That reminds me I owe you fifty rupees for the condensed milk. I thought perhaps you'd be coming here when you were transferred to the Khanda district, and I could pay you then; but you didn't.'

'I passed within five miles of the camp. It was in the middle of a march, you see, and the carts were breaking down every few minutes, and I couldn't get 'em over the ground till ten o'clock that night. But I wanted to come awfully. You knew I did, didn't you?'

'I—believe—I—did,' said William, facing him with level eyes. She was no longer white.

'Did you understand?'

'Why you didn't ride in? Of course I did.'

'Why?'

'Because you couldn't, of course. I knew that.'

'Did you care?'

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'If you had come in—but I knew you wouldn't—but if you had, I should have cared a great deal. You know I should.'

'Thank God I didn't! Oh, but I wanted to! I couldn't trust myself to ride in front of the carts, because I kept edging 'em over here, don't you know?'

'I knew you wouldn't,' said William, contentedly. 'Here's your fifty.'

Scott bent forward and kissed the hand that held the greasy notes. Its fellow patted him awkwardly but very tenderly on the head.

'And you knew, too, didn't you?' said William, in a new voice.

'No, on my honour, I didn't. I hadn't the—the cheek to expect anything of the kind, except . . . I say, were you out riding anywhere the day I passed by to Khanda?'

William nodded, and smiled after the manner of an angel surprised in a good deed.

'Then it was just a speck I saw of your habit in the—'

'Palm-grove on the Southern cart-road. I saw your helmet when you came up from the nullah by the temple—just enough to be sure that you were all right. D'you care?'

This time Scott did not kiss her hand, for they were in the dusk of the dining-tent, and, because William's knees were trembling under her, she had to sit down in the nearest chair, where she wept long and happily, her head on her arms; and when Scott imagined that it would be well to comfort her, she needing nothing of the kind, she ran to her own tent; and Scott went out into the world, and smiled upon it largely and idiotically. But when Faiz Ullah brought him a drink, he found it

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necessary to support one hand with the other, or the good whisky and soda would have been spilled abroad. There are fevers and fevers.

But it was worse—much worse—the strained, eye-shirking talk at dinner till the servants had withdrawn, and worst of all when Mrs. Jim, who had been on the edge of weeping from the soup down, kissed Scott and William, and they drank one whole bottle of champagne, hot, because there was no ice, and Scott and William sat outside the tent in the starlight till Mrs. Jim drove them in for fear of more fever.

Apropos of these things and some others William said: ‘Being engaged is abominable, because, you see, one has no official position. We must be thankful that we’ve lots of things to do.’

‘Things to do!’ said Jim, when that was reported to him. ‘They’re neither of them any good any more. I can’t get five hours’ work a day out of Scott. He’s in the clouds half the time.’

‘Oh, but they’re so beautiful to watch, Jimmy. It will break my heart when they go. Can’t you do anything for him?’

‘I’ve given the Government the impression—at least, I hope I have—that he personally conducted the entire famine. But all he wants is to get on to the Luni Canal Works, -and William’s just as bad. Have you ever heard ’em talking of barrage and aprons and wastewater? It’s their style of spooning, I suppose.’

Mrs. Jim smiled tenderly. ‘Ah, that’s in the intervals—bless ’em.’

And so Love ran about the camp unrebuked in broad daylight, while men picked up the pieces and put them neatly away of the Famine in the Eight Districts.

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Morning brought the penetrating chill of the Northern December, the layers of wood-smoke, the dusty gray blue of the tamarisks, the domes of ruined tombs, and all the smell of the white Northern plains, as the mail-train ran on to the mile-long Sutlej Bridge. William, wrapped in a poshteen—a silk-embroidered sheep-skin jacket trimmed with rough astrakhan—looked out with moist eyes and nostrils that dilated joyously. The South of pagodas and palm-trees, the over-populated Hindu South, was done with. Here was the land she knew and loved, and before her lay the good life she understood, among folk of her own caste and mind.

They were picking them up at almost every station now—men and women coming in for the Christmas Week, with racquets, with bundles of polo-sticks, with dear and bruised cricket-bats, with fox-terriers and saddles. The greater part of them wore jackets like William's, for the Northern cold is as little to be trifled with as the Northern heat. And William was among them and of them, her hands deep in her pockets, her collar turned up over her ears, stamping her feet on the platforms as she walked up and down to get warm, visiting from carriage to carriage, and everywhere being congratulated. Scott was with the bachelors at the far end of the train, where they chaffed him mercilessly about feeding babies and milking goats; but from time to time he would stroll up to William's window, and murmur: 'Good enough, isn't it?' and William would answer with sighs of pure delight: 'Good enough, indeed.' The large open names of the home towns were good to listen to. Umballa, Ludianah, Phillour, Jullundur, they rang like the coming marriage-bells in her ears, and William felt deeply and truly sorry for all strangers

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and outsiders—visitors, tourists, and those fresh-caught for the service of the country.

It was a glorious return, and when the bachelors gave the Christmas ball, William was, unofficially, you might say, the chief and honoured guest among the stewards, who could make things very pleasant for their friends. She and Scott danced nearly all the dances together, and sat out the rest in the big dark gallery overlooking the superb teak floor, where the uniforms blazed, and the spurs clinked, and the new frocks and four hundred dancers went round and round till the draped flags on the pillars flapped and bellied to the whirl of it.

About midnight half a dozen men who did not care for dancing came over from the Club to play ‘Waits,’ and—that was a surprise the stewards had arranged—before any one knew what had happened, the band stopped, and hidden voices broke into ‘Good King Wenceslaus,’ and William in the gallery hummed and beat time with her foot:

‘Mark my footsteps well, my page,
Tread thou in them boldly.
Thou shalt feel the winter’s rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly!’

‘Oh, I hope they are going to give us another! Isn’t it pretty, coming out of the dark in that way? Look—look down. There’s Mrs. Gregory wiping her eyes!’

‘It’s like home, rather,’ said Scott. ‘I remember—’
‘H’sh! Listen!—dear.’ And it began again:

‘When shepherds watched their flocks by night—’

‘A-h-h!’ said William, drawing closer to Scott.

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'All seated on the ground,
The Angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.
"Fear not," said he (for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind);
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind."'

This time it was William that wiped her eyes.

·007

(1896)

A LOCOMOTIVE is, next to a marine engine, the most sensitive thing man ever made; and No. ·007, besides being sensitive, was new. The red paint was hardly dry on his spotless bumper-bar, his headlight shone like a fireman's helmet, and his cab might have been a hardwood-finish parlour. They had run him into the round-house after his trial—he had said good-bye to his best friend in the shops, the overhead travelling-crane—the big world was just outside; and the other locos were taking stock of him. He looked at the semicircle of bold, unwinking headlights, heard the low purr and mutter of the steam mounting in the gauges—scornful hisses of contempt as a slack valve lifted a little—and would have given a month's oil for leave to crawl through his own driving-wheels into the brick ash-pit beneath him. ·007 was an eight-wheeled 'American' loco, slightly different from others of his type, and as he stood he was worth ten thousand dollars on the Company's books. But if you had bought him at his own valuation, after half an hour's waiting in the darkish, echoing round-house, you would have saved exactly nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine dollars and ninety-eight cents.

A heavy Mogul freight, with a short cow-catcher and

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a fire-box that came down within three inches of the rail, began the impolite game, speaking to a Pittsburgh Consolidation, who was visiting.

'Where did this thing blow in from?' he asked, with a dreamy puff of light steam.

'It's all I can do to keep track of our own makes,' was the answer, 'without lookin' after your back-numbers. 'Guess it's something Peter Cooper left over when he died.'

·007 quivered; his steam was getting up, but he held his tongue. Even a hand-car knows what sort of locomotive it was that Peter Cooper experimented upon in the far-away Thirties. It carried its coal and water in two apple-barrels, and was not much bigger than a bicycle.

Then up and spoke a small, newish switching-engine, with a little step in front of his bumper-timber, and his wheels so close together that he looked like a broncho getting ready to buck.

'Something's wrong with the road when a Pennsylvania gravel-pusher tells us anything about our stock, I think. That kid's all right. Eustis designed him, and Eustis designed me. Ain't that good enough?'

·007 could have carried the switching-loco round the yard in his tender, but he felt grateful for even this little word of consolation.

'We don't use hand-cars on the Pennsylvania,' said the Consolidation. 'That—er—peanut-stand's old enough and ugly enough to speak for himself.'

'He hasn't bin spoken to yet. He's bin spoken at. Hain't ye any manners on the Pennsylvania?' said the switching-loco.

'You ought to be in the yard, Poney,' said the Mogul, severely. 'We're all long-haulers here.'

'That's what you think,' the little fellow replied.

‘You’ll know more ’fore the night’s out. I’ve bin down to Track 17, and the freight there—oh, Christmas!’

‘I’ve trouble enough in my own division,’ said a lean, light suburban loco with very shiny brake-shoes. ‘My commuters wouldn’t rest till they got a parlour-car. They’ve hitched her back of all, and she hauls worse’n a snow-plough. I’ll snap her off some day sure, and then they’ll blame every one except their fool selves. They’ll be askin’ me to haul a vestibuled next!’

‘They made you in New Jersey, didn’t they?’ said Poney. ‘Thought so. Commuters and truck-waggon’s ain’t any sweet haulin’, but I tell you they’re a heap better’n cuttin’ out refrigerator-cars or oil-tanks. Why, I’ve hauled—’

‘Haul! You?’ said the Mogul contemptuously. ‘It’s all you can do to bunt a cold-storage car up the yard. Now, I—he paused a little to let the words sink in—‘I handle the Flying Freight—e-leven cars worth just anything you please to mention. On the stroke of eleven I pull out; and I’m timed for thirty-five an hour. Costly—perishable—fragile—immediate—that’s me! Suburban traffic’s only but one degree better than switching. Express freight’s what pays.’

‘Well, I ain’t given to blowing, as a rule,’ began the Pittsburgh Consolidation.

‘No? You was sent in here because you grunted on the grade,’ Poney interrupted.

‘Where I grunt, you’d lie down, Poney; but, as I was saying, I don’t blow much. Notwithstandin’, if you want to see freight that is freight moved lively, you should see me warbling through the Alleghanies with thirty-seven ore-cars behind me, and my brake-men fightin’ tramps so’s they can’t attend to my tooter. I

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have to do all the holdin' back then, and, though I say it, I've never had a load get away from me yet. No, sir. Haulin' 's one thing, but judgment and discretion's another. You want judgment in my business.'

'Ah! But—but are you not paralysed by a sense of your overwhelming responsibilities?' said a curious, husky voice from a corner.

'Who's that?' '007 whispered to the Jersey commuter.

'Compound—experiment—N. G. She's bin switchin' in the B. & A. yards for six months, when she wasn't in the shops. She's economical (I call it mean) in her coal, but she takes it out in repairs. Ahem! I presume you found Boston somewhat isolated, madam, after your New York season?'

'I am never so well occupied as when I am alone.' The Compound seemed to be talking from halfway up her smoke-stack.

'Sure,' said the irreverent Poney, under his breath. 'They don't hanker after her any in the yard.'

'But, with my constitution and temperament—my work lies in Boston—I find your outrecuidance—'

'Outer which?' said the Mogul freight. 'Simple cylinders are good enough for me.'

'Perhaps I should have said faroucherie,' hissed the Compound.

'I don't hold with any make of papier-mache wheel,' the Mogul insisted.

The Compound sighed pityingly, and said no more.

'Git 'em all shapes in this world, don't ye?' said Poney. 'That's Mass'chusetts all over. They half start, an' then they stick on a dead-centre, an' blame it all on other folk's ways o' treatin' them. Talkin' o' Boston, Comanche told me, last night, he had a hot-box

just beyond the Newtons, Friday. That was why, he says, the Accommodation was held up. Made out no end of a tale, Comanche did.'

'If I'd heard that in the shops, with my boiler out for repairs, I'd know 't was one o' Comanche's lies,' the New Jersey commuter snapped 'Hot-box! Him! What happened was they'd put an extra car on, and he just lay down on the grade and squealed. They had to send 127 to help him through. Made it out a hot-box, did he? Time before that he said he was ditched! Looked me square in the headlight and told me that as cool as—as a water-tank in a cold wave. Hot-box! You ask 127 about Comanche's hot-box. Why, Comanche he was side-tracked, and 127 (he was just about as mad as they make 'em on account o' being called out at ten o'clock at night) took hold and whirled her into Boston in seventeen minutes. Hot-box! Hot fraud! That's what Comanche is.'

Then ·007 put both drivers and his pilot into it, as the saying is, for he asked what sort of thing a hot-box might be?

'Paint my bell sky-blue!' said Poney, the switcher. 'Make me a surface-railroad loco with a hardwood skirtin'-board round my wheels! Break me up and cast me into five-cent sidewalk-fakirs' mechanical toys! Here's an eight-wheel coupled "American" don't know what a hot-box is! Never heard of an emergency-stop either, did ye? Don't know what ye carry jack-screws for? You're too innocent to be left alone with your own tender. Oh, you—you flat-car!'

There was a roar of escaping steam before any one could answer, and ·007 nearly blistered his paint off with pure mortification.

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'A hot-box,' began the Compound, picking and choosing the words as though they were coal, 'a hot-box is the penalty exacted from inexperience by haste. Ahem!'

'Hot-box!' said the Jersey Suburban. 'It's the price you pay for going on the tear. It's years since I've had one. It's a disease that don't attack short-haulers, as a rule.'

'We never have hot-boxes on the Pennsylvania,' said the Consolidation. 'They get 'em in New York—same as nervous prostration.'

'Ah, go home on a ferry-boat,' said the Mogul. 'You think because you use worse grades than our road 'ud allow, you're a kind of Alleghany angel. Now, I'll tell you what you . . . Here's my folk. Well, I can't stop. See you later, perhaps.'

He rolled forward majestically to the turn-table, and swung like a man-of-war in a tideway, till he picked up his track. 'But as for you, you pea-green swivellin' coffee-pot [this to '007], you go out and learn something before you associate with those who've made more mileage in a week than you'll roll up in a year. Costly—perishable—fragile—immediate—that's me! S'long.'

'Split my tubes if that's actin' polite to a new member o' the Brotherhood,' said Poney. 'There wasn't any call to trample on ye like that. But manners was left out when Moguls was made. Keep up your fire, kid, an' burn your own smoke. 'Guess we'll all be wanted in a minute.'

Men were talking rather excitedly in the round-house. One man, in a dingy jersey, said that he hadn't any locomotives to waste on the yard. Another man, with a piece of crumpled paper in his hand, said that the yard-

master said that he was to say that if the other man said anything, he (the other man) was to shut his head. Then the other man waved his arms, and wanted to know if he was expected to keep locomotives in his hip-pocket. Then a man in a black Prince Albert coat, without a collar, came up dripping, for it was a hot August night, and said that what he said went; and between the three of them the locomotives began to go, too—first the Compound, then the Consolidation, then ·007.

Now, deep down in his fire-box, ·007 had cherished a hope that as soon as his trial was done, he would be led forth with songs and shoutings, and attached to a green-and-chocolate vestibuled flyer, under charge of a bold and noble engineer, who would pat him on his back, and weep over him, and call him his Arab steed. (The boys in the shops where he was built used to read wonderful stories of railroad life, and ·007 expected things to happen as he had heard.) But there did not seem to be many vestibuled fliers in the roaring, rumbling, electric-lighted yards, and his engineer only said:

‘Now, what sort of a fool-sort of an injector has Eustis loaded on to this rig this time?’ And he put the lever over with an angry snap, crying: ‘Am I supposed to switch with this thing, hey?’

The collarless man mopped his head, and replied that, in the present state of the yard and freight and a few other things, the engineer would switch and keep on switching till the cows came home. ·007 pushed out gingerly, his heart in his headlight, so nervous that the clang of his own bell almost made him jump the track. Lanterns waved, or danced up and down, before and behind him; and on every side, six tracks deep, sliding

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backward and forward, with clashings of couplers and squeals of hand-brakes, were cars—more cars than '007 had dreamed of. There were oil-cars, and hay-cars, and stock-cars full of lowing beasts, and ore-cars, and potato-cars with stovepipe-ends sticking out in the middle; cold-storage and refrigerator cars dripping ice-water on the tracks; ventilated fruit- and milk-cars; flat-cars with truck-waggon full of market-stuff; flat-cars loaded with reapers and binders, all red and green and gilt under the sizzling electric lights; flat-cars piled high with strong-scented hides, pleasant hemlock-plank, or bundles of shingles; flat-cars creaking to the weight of thirty-ton castings, angle-irons, and rivet-boxes for some new bridge; and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of box-cars loaded, locked and chalked. Men—hot and angry—crawled among and between and under the thousand wheels; men took flying jumps through his cab, when he halted for a moment; men sat on his pilot as he went forward, and on his tender as he returned; and regiments of men ran along the tops of the box-cars beside him, screwing down brakes, waving their arms, and crying curious things.

He was pushed forward a foot at a time, whirled backwards, his rear drivers clinking and clanking, a quarter of a mile; jerked into a switch (yard-switches are very stubby and unaccommodating), bunted into a Red D, or Merchant's Transport car, and, with no hint or knowledge of the weight behind him, started up anew. When his load was fairly on the move, three or four cars would be cut off, and '007 would bound forward, only to be held hiccupping on the brake. Then he would wait a few minutes, watching the whirled lanterns, deafened with the clang of the bells, giddy with the

vision of the sliding cars, his brake-pump panting forty to the minute, his front coupler lying sideways on his cow-catcher, like a tired dog's tongue in his mouth, and the whole of him covered with half-burnt coal-dust.

'Tisn't so easy switching with a straight-backed tender,' said his little friend of the round-house, bustling by at a trot. 'But you're comin' on pretty fair. Ever seen a flyin' switch? No? Then watch me.'

Poney was in charge of a dozen heavy flat-cars. Suddenly he shot away from them with a sharp 'Whutt!' A switch opened in the shadows ahead; he turned up it like a rabbit, it snapped behind him, and the long line of twelve-foot-high lumber jolted on into the arms of a full-sized road-loco, who acknowledged receipt with a dry howl.

'My man's reckoned the smartest in the yard at that trick,' he said, returning. 'Gives me cold shivers when another fool tries it, though. That's where my short wheel-base comes in. Likes as not you'd have your tender scraped off if you tried it.'

·007 had no ambitions that way, and said so.

'No? Of course this ain't your regular business, but say, don't you think it's interestin'? Have you seen the yard-master? Well, he's the greatest man on earth, an' don't you forget it. When are we through? Why, kid, it's always like this, day an' night—Sundays and week-days. See that thirty-car freight slidin' in four, no, five tracks off? She's all mixed freight, sent here to be sorted out into straight trains. That's why we're cuttin' out the cars one by one.' He gave a vigorous push to a west-bound car as he spoke, and started back with a little snort of surprise, for the car was an old friend—an M. T. K. box-car.

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'Jack my drivers, but it's Homeless Kate! Why, Kate, ain't there no gettin' you back to your friends? There's forty chasers out for you from your road, if there's one. Who's holdin' you now?'

'Wish I knew,' whimpered Homeless Kate. 'I belong in Topeka, but I've bin to Cedar Rapids; I've bin to Winnipeg; I've bin to Newport News; I've bin all down the old Atlanta and West Point; an' I've bin to Buffalo. Maybe I'll fetch up at Haverstraw. I've only bin out ten months, but I'm homesick—I'm just achin' homesick.'

'Try Chicago, Katie,' said the switching-loco; and the battered old car lumbered down the track, jolting: 'I want to be in Kansas when the sunflowers bloom.'

'Yard's full o' Homeless Kates an' Wanderin' Willies,' he explained to '007. 'I knew an old Fitchburg flat-car out seventeen months; an' one of ours was gone fifteen 'fore ever we got track of her. Dunno quite how our men fix it. Swap around, I guess. Anyway, I've done my duty. She's on her way to Kansas, via Chicago; but I'll lay my next boilerful she'll be held there to wait consignee's convenience, and sent back to us with wheat in the fall.'

Just then the Pittsburgh Consolidation passed, at the head of a dozen cars.

'I'm goin' home,' he said proudly.

'Can't get all them twelve on to the flat. Break 'em in half, Duchy!' cried Poney. But it was '007 who was backed down to the last six cars, and he nearly blew up with surprise when he found himself pushing them on to a huge ferry-boat. He had never seen deep water before, and shivered as the flat drew away and left his bogies within six inches of the black, shiny tide.

After this he was hurried to the freight-house, where he saw the yard-master, a smallish, white-faced man in shirt, trousers, and slippers, looking down upon a sea of trucks, a mob of bawling truckmen, and squadrons of backing, turning, sweating, spark-striking horses.

'That's shippers' carts loadin' on to the receivin' trucks,' said the small engine reverently. 'But he don't care. He lets 'em cuss. He's the Czar—King—Boss! He says "Please," and then they kneel down an' pray. There's three or four strings o' to-day's freight to be pulled before he can attend to them. When he waves his hand that way, things happen.'

A string of loaded cars slid out down the track, and a string of empties took their place. Bales, crates, boxes, jars, carboys, frails, cases, and packages, flew into them from the freight-house as though the cars had been magnets and they iron filings.

'Ki-yah!' shrieked little Poney. 'Ain't it great?'

A purple-faced truckman shouldered his way to the yard-master, and shook his fist under his nose. The yard-master never looked up from his bundle of freight-receipts. He crooked his forefinger slightly, and a tall young man in a red shirt, lounging carelessly beside him, hit the truckman under the left ear, so that he dropped, quivering and clucking, on a hay-bale.

'Eleven, seven, ninety-seven, L. Y. S.; fourteen ought ought three; nineteen thirteen; one one four; seventeen ought twenty-one M. B.; and the ten west-bound. All straight except the two last. Cut 'em off at the junction. An' that's all right. Pull that string.' The yard-master, with mild blue eyes, looked out over the howling truckmen at the waters in the moonlight beyond, and hummed:

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'All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lawd Gawd He made all!'

'007 moved the cars out and delivered them to the regular road-engine. He had never felt quite so limp in his life.

'Curious, ain't it?' said Poney, puffing, on the next track. 'You an' me, if we got that man under our bumpers, we'd work him into red waste and not know what we'd done; but—up there with the steam hummin' in his boiler that awful quiet way . . .'

'I know,' said '007. 'Makes me feel as if I'd dropped my fire an' was getting cold. He is the greatest man on earth.'

They were at the far north end of the yard now, under a switch-tower, looking down on the four-track way of the main traffic. The Boston Compound was to haul '007's string to some far-away northern junction over an indifferent road-bed, and she mourned aloud for the ninety-six-pound rails of the B. & A.

'You're young; you're young,' she coughed. 'You don't realise your responsibilities.'

'Yes, he does,' said Poney sharply; 'but he don't lie down under 'em.' Then, with a side-spurt of steam, exactly like a tough spitting: 'There ain't more than fifteen thousand dollars' worth o' freight behind her anyway, and she carries on as if 'twere a hundred thousand—same as the Mogul's. Excuse me, madam, but you've the track. . . . She's stuck on a dead-centre again—bein' specially designed not to.'

The Compound crawled across the tracks on a long

slant, groaning horribly at each switch, and moving like a cow in a snow-drift. There was a little pause along the yard after her tail-lights had disappeared; switches locked crisply, and every one seemed to be waiting.

‘Now I’ll show you something worth,’ said Poney. ‘When the Purple Emperor ain’t on time, it’s about time to amend the Constitution. The first stroke of twelve is—’

‘Boom!’ went the clock in the big yard-tower, and far away ·007 heard a full vibrating ‘Yah! Yah! Yah!’ A headlight twinkled on the horizon like a star, grew an overpowering blaze, and whooped up the humming track to the roaring music of a happy giant’s song:

‘With a michnai—ghignai—shtingal! Yah! Yah!
Yah!

Ein—zwei—drei—Mutter! Yah! Yah! Yah!

She climb upon der shteeple,
Und she frighten all der people.

Singin’ michnai—ghignai—shtingal! Yah! Yah!’

The last defiant ‘yah! yah!’ was delivered a mile and a half beyond the passenger-depot; but ·007 had caught one glimpse of the superb six-wheel-coupled racing-locomotive, who hauled the pride and glory of the road—the gilt-edged Purple Emperor, the millionaires’ south-bound express, laying the miles over his shoulder as a man peels a shaving from a soft board. The rest was a blur of maroon enamel, a bar of white light from the electrics in the cars, and a flicker of nickel-plated hand-rail on the rear platform.

‘Ooh!’ said ·007.

‘Seventy-five miles an hour these five miles. Baths,

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I've heard; barber's shop; ticker; and a library and the rest to match. Yes, sir; seventy-five an hour! But he'll talk to you in the round-house just as democratic as I would. And I—cuss my wheel-base!—I'd kick clean off the track at half his gait. He's the master of our Lodge. Cleans up at our house. I'll introdooce you some day. He's worth knowin'! There ain't many can sing that song, either.'

'007 was too full of emotions to answer. He did not hear a raging of telephone-bells in the switch-tower, nor the man, as he leaned out and called to '007's engineer: 'Got any steam?'

'Nough to run her a hundred mile out o' this, if I could,' said the engineer, who belonged to the open road and hated switching.

'Then get. The Flying Freight's ditched forty mile out, with fifty rod o' track ploughed up. No; no one's hurt, but both tracks are blocked. Lucky the wreckin'-car an' derrick are this end of the yard. Crew'll be along in a minute. Hurry! You've the track.'

'Well, I could jest kick my little sawed-off self,' said Poney, as '007 was backed, with a bang, on to a grim and grimy car like a caboose, but full of tools—a flat-car and a derrick behind it. 'Some folks are one thing, and some are another; but you're in luck, kid. They push a wrecking-car. Now, don't get rattled. Your wheel-base will keep you on the track, and there ain't any curves worth mentionin'. Oh, say! Comanche told me there's one section o' saw-edged track that's liable to jounce ye a little. Fifteen an' a half out, after the grade at Jackson's crossin'. You'll know it by a farmhouse an' a windmill and five maples in the dooryard. Windmill's west o' the maples. An' there's an eighty-

foot iron bridge in the middle o' that section with no guard-rails. See you later. Luck!'

Before he knew well what had happened, ·007 was flying up the track into the dumb dark world. Then fears of the night beset him. He remembered all he had ever heard of landslides, rain-piled boulders, blown trees, and strayed cattle; all that the Boston Compound had ever said of responsibility; and a great deal more that came out of his own head. With a very quavering voice he whistled for his first grade crossing (an event in the life of a locomotive), and his nerves were in no way restored by the sight of a frantic horse and a white-faced man in a buggy less than a yard from his right shoulder. Then he was sure he would jump the track; felt his flanges mounting the rail at every curve; knew that his first grade would make him lie down even as Comanche had done at the Newtons. He swept down the grade to Jackson's crossing, saw the windmill west of the maples, felt the badly-laid rails spring under him, and sweated big drops all over his boiler. At each jarring bump he believed an axle had smashed; and he took the eighty-foot bridge without the guard-rail like a hunted cat on the top of a fence. Then a wet leaf stuck against the glass of his headlight and threw a flying shadow on the track, so that he thought it was some little dancing animal that would feel soft if he ran over it; and anything soft underfoot frightens a locomotive as it does an elephant. But the men behind seemed quite calm. The wrecking-crew were climbing carelessly from the caboose to the tender—even jesting with the engineer, for he heard a shuffling of feet among the coal, and the snatch of a song, something like this:

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'Oh, the Empire State must learn to wait,
And the Cannon-ball go hang,
When the West-bound's ditched, and the tool-car's
hitched,
And it's 'way for the Breakdown Gang (Ta-rara!)
'Way for the Breakdown Gang!'

'Say! Eustis knew what he was doin' when he designed this rig. She's a hummer. New, too.'

'Snff! Phew! She is new. That ain't paint. That's—'

A burning pain shot through '007's right rear driver—a crippling, stinging pain.

'This,' said '007, as he flew, 'is a hot-box. Now I know what it means. I shall go to pieces, I guess. My first road-run, too!'

'Het a bit, ain't she?' the fireman ventured to suggest to the engineer.

'She'll hold for all we want of her. We're 'most there. 'Guess you chaps back had better climb into your car,' said the engineer, his hand on the brake-lever. 'I've seen men snapped off—'

But the crew fled laughing. They had no wish to be jerked on to the track. The engineer half turned his wrist, and '007 found his drivers pinned firm.

'Now it's come!' said '007, as he yelled aloud, and slid like a sleigh. For the moment he fancied that he would jerk bodily from off his underpinning.

'That must be the emergency-stop Poney guyed me about,' he gasped, as soon as he could think. 'Hot-box—emergency-stop. They both hurt; but now I can talk back in the round-house.'

He was halted, all hissing hot, a few feet in the rear of

what doctors would call a compound-comminuted car. His engineer was kneeling down among his drivers, but he did not call ·007 his 'Arab steed,' nor cry over him, as the engineers did in the newspapers. He just bad-worded ·007, and pulled yards of charred cotton-waste from about the axles, and hoped he might some day catch the idiot who had packed it. Nobody else attended to him, for Evans, the Mogul's engineer, a little cut about the head, but very angry, was exhibiting, by lantern-light, the mangled corpse of a slim blue pig.

' 'T weren't even a decent-sized hog,' he said. ' 'T were a shote.'

'Dangerousest beasts they are,' said one of the crew. 'Get under the pilot an' sort o' twiddle ye off the track, don't they?'

'Don't they?' roared Evans, who was a red-headed Welshman. 'You talk as if I was ditched by a hog every fool-day o' the week. I ain't friends with all the cussed half-fed shotes in the State o' New York. No, indeed! Yes, this is him—an' look what he's done!'

It was not a bad night's work for one stray piglet. The Flying Freight seemed to have flown in every direction, for the Mogul had mounted the rails and run diagonally a few hundred feet from right to left, taking with him such cars as cared to follow. Some had not. They broke their couplers and lay down, while rear cars frolicked over them. In that game, they had ploughed up and removed and twisted a good deal of the left-hand track. The Mogul himself had waddled into a cornfield, and there he knelt—fantastic wreaths of green twisted round his crank-pins; his pilot covered with solid clods of field, on which corn nodded drunkenly; his fire put out with dirt (Evans had done that as soon as he re-

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covered his senses); and his broken headlight half full of half-burnt moths. His tender had thrown coal all over him, and he looked like a disreputable buffalo who had tried to wallow in a general store. For there lay, scattered over the landscape, from the burst cars, typewriters, sewing-machines, bicycles in crates, a consignment of silver-plated imported harness, French dresses and gloves, a dozen finely moulded hard-wood mantels, a fifteen-foot naphtha-launch, with a solid brass bedstead crumpled around her bows, a case of telescopes and microscopes, two coffins, a case of very best candies, some gilt-edged dairy produce, butter and eggs in an omelette, a broken box of expensive toys, and a few hundred other luxuries. A camp of tramps hurried up from nowhere, and generously volunteered to help the crew. So the brakemen, armed with coupler-pins, walked up and down on one side, and the freight-conductor and the fireman patrolled the other with their hands in their hip-pockets. A long-bearded man came out of a house beyond the cornfield, and told Evans that if the accident had happened a little later in the year, all his corn would have been burned, and accused Evans of carelessness. Then he ran away, for Evans was at his heels shrieking, ‘ ’Twas his hog done it—his hog done it! Let me kill him! Let me kill him!’ Then the wrecking-crew laughed; and the farmer put his head out of a window and said that Evans was no gentleman.

But ‘007 was very sober. He had never seen a wreck before, and it frightened him. The crew still laughed, but they worked at the same time; and ‘007 forgot horror in amazement at the way they handled the Mogul freight. They dug round him with spades; they put ties in front of his wheels, and jack-screws under him;

they embraced him with the derrick-chain and tickled him with crowbars; while ·007 was hitched on to wrecked cars and backed away till the knot broke or the cars rolled clear of the track. By dawn thirty or forty men were at work, replacing and ramming down the ties, gauging the rails and spiking them. By daylight all cars who could move had gone on in charge of another loco; the track was freed for traffic; and ·007 had hauled the old Mogul over a small pavement of ties, inch by inch, till his flanges bit the rail once more, and he settled down with a clank. But his spirit was broken, and his nerve was gone.

‘ ‘T weren’t even a hog,’ he repeated dolefully; ‘ ‘t were a shote; and you—you of all of ’em—had to help me on.’

‘But how in the whole long road did it happen?’ asked ·007 sizzling with curiosity.

‘Happen! It didn’t happen! It just come! I sailed right on top of him around that last curve—thought he was a skunk. Yes; he was all as little as that. He hadn’t more’n squealed once ’fore I felt my bogies lift (he’d rolled right under the pilot), and I couldn’t catch the track again to save me. Swivelled clean off, I was. Then I felt him sling himself along, all greasy, under my left leadin’ driver, and, oh, Boilers! that mounted the rail. I heard my flanges zippin’ along the ties, an’ the next I knew I was playin’ “Sally, Sally Waters” in the corn, my tender shuckin’ coal through my cab, an’ old man Evans lyin’ still an’ bleedin’ in front o’ me. Shook? There ain’t a stay or a bolt or a rivet in me that ain’t sprung to glory somewhere.’

‘Umm!’ said ·007. ‘What d’you reckon you weigh?’

‘Without these lumps o’ dirt I’m all of a hundred thousand pound.’

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'And the shote?'

'Eighty. Call him a hundred pounds at the outside. He's worth about four'n a half dollars. Ain't it awful? Ain't it enough to give you nervous prostration? Ain't it paralyzin'? Why, I come just around that curve—' and the Mogul told the tale again, for he was very badly shaken.

'Well, it's all in the day's run, I guess,' said '007, soothingly; 'an'—an' a cornfield's pretty soft fallin'.'

'If it had bin a sixty-foot bridge, an' I could ha' slid off into deep water, an' blown up an' killed both men, same as others have done, I wouldn't ha' cared; but to be ditched by a shote—an' you to help me out—in a cornfield—an' an old hayseed in his nightgown cussin' me like as if I was a sick truck-horse! . . . Oh, it's awful! Don't call me Mogul! I'm a sewin'-machine. They'll guy my sand-box off in the yard.'

And '007, his hot-box cooled and his experience vastly enlarged, hauled the Mogul freight slowly to the round-house.

'Hello, old man! Bin out all night, hain't ye?' said the irrepressible Poney, who had just come off duty. 'Well, I must say you look it. Costly—perishable—fragile—immediate—that's you! Go to the shops, take them vine-leaves out o' your hair, an' git 'em to play the hose on you.'

'Leave him alone, Poney,' said '007 severely, as he was swung on the turn-table, 'or I'll—'

'Didn't know the old granger was any special friend o' yours, kid. He wasn't over civil to you last time I saw him.'

'I know it; but I've seen a wreck since then, and it has about scared the paint off me. I'm not going to guy

any one as long as I steam—not when they're new to the business an' anxious to learn. And I'm not goin' to guy the old Mogul either, though I did find him wreathed around with roastin'-ears. 'Twas a little bit of a shote—not a hog—just a shote, Poney—no bigger'n a lump of anthracite—I saw it—that made all the mess. Anybody can be ditched, I guess.'

'Found that out already, have you? Well, that's a good beginnin'.' It was the Purple Emperor, with his high, tight, plate-glass cab and green velvet cushion, waiting to be cleaned for his next day's fly.

'Let me make you two gen'lemen acquainted,' said Poney. 'This is our Purple Emperor, kid, whom you were admirin' and, I may say, envyin' last night. This is a new brother, worshipful sir, with most of his mileage ahead of him, but so far as a serving-brother can, I'll answer for him.'

'Happy to meet you,' said the Purple Emperor, with a glance round the crowded round-house. 'I guess there are enough of us here to form a full meetin'. Ahem! By virtue of the authority vested in me as Head of the Road, I hereby declare and pronounce No. ·007 a full and accepted Brother of the Amalgamated Brotherhood of Locomotives, and as such entitled to all shop, switch, track, tank, and round-house privileges throughout my jurisdiction, in the Degree of Superior Flier, it bein' well known and credibly reported to me that our Brother has covered forty-one miles in thirty-nine minutes and a half on an errand of mercy to the afflicted. At a convenient time, I myself will communicate to you the Song and Signal of this Degree whereby you may be recognised in the darkest night. Take your stall, newly-entered Brother among Locomotives!'

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Now, in the darkest night, even as the Purple Emperor said, if you will stand on the bridge across the freight-yard, looking down upon the four-track way, at 2.30 a. m., neither before nor after, when the White Moth, that takes the overflow from the Purple Emperor, tears south with her seven vestibuled cream-white cars, you will hear, as the yard-clock makes the half-hour, a far-away sound like the bass of a violoncello, and then, a hundred feet to each word:

‘With a michnai—ghignai—shtingal! Yah! Yah!
Yah!

Ein—zwei—drei—Mutter! Yah! Yah! Yah!

She climb upon der shteeple,

Und she frighten all der people,

Singin’ michnai—ghignai—shtingal! Yah! Yah!’

That is ‘007 covering his one hundred and fifty-six miles in two hundred and twenty-one minutes.

THE MALTESE CAT

(1895)

THEY had good reason to be proud, and better reason to be afraid, all twelve of them; for, though they had fought their way, game by game, up the teams entered for the polo tournament, they were meeting the Archangels that afternoon in the final match; and the Archangels' men were playing with half-a-dozen ponies apiece. As the game was divided into six quarters of eight minutes each, that meant a fresh pony after every halt. The Skidars' team, even supposing there were no accidents, could only supply one pony for every other change; and two to one is heavy odds. Again, as Shiraz, the gray Syrian, pointed out, they were meeting the pink and pick of the polo-ponies of Upper India; ponies that had cost from a thousand rupees each, while they themselves were a cheap lot gathered, often from country carts, by their masters who belonged to a poor but honest native infantry regiment.

'Money means pace and weight,' said Shiraz, rubbing his black silk nose dolefully along his neat-fitting boot, 'and by the maxims of the game as I know it—'

'Ah, but we aren't playing the maxims,' said the Maltese Cat. 'We're playing the game, and we've the great advantage of knowing the game. Just think a

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stride, Shiraz. We've pulled up from bottom to second place in two weeks against all those fellows on the ground here; and that's because we play with our heads as well as with our feet.'

'It makes me feel undersized and unhappy all the same,' said Kittiwynk, a mouse-coloured mare with a red browband and the cleanest pair of legs that ever an aged pony owned. 'They've twice our size, these others.'

Kittiwynk looked at the gathering and sighed. The hard, dusty Umballa polo-ground was lined with thousands of soldiers, black and white, not counting hundreds and hundreds of carriages, and drags, and dog-carts, and ladies with brilliant-coloured parasols, and officers in uniform and out of it, and crowds of natives behind them; and orderlies on camels who had halted to watch the game, instead of carrying letters up and down the station, and native horse-dealers running about on thin-eared Biluchi mares, looking for a chance to sell a few first-class polo-ponies. Then there were the ponies of thirty teams that had entered for the Upper India Free-for-All Cup—nearly every pony of worth and dignity from Mhow to Peshawar, from Allahabad to Multan; prize ponies, Arabs, Syrian, Barb, country bred, Decanee, Waziri, and Kabul ponies of every colour and shape and temper that you could imagine. Some of them were in mat-roofed stables close to the polo-ground, but most were under saddle while their masters, who had been defeated in the earlier games, trotted in and out and told each other exactly how the game should be played.

It was a glorious sight, and the come-and-go of the little quick hoofs, and the incessant salutations of ponies

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that had met before on other polo-grounds or race-courses, were enough to drive a four-footed thing wild.

But the Skidars' team were careful not to know their neighbours, though half the ponies on the ground were anxious to scrape acquaintance with the little fellows that had come from the North, and, so far, had swept the board.

'Let's see,' said a soft, golden-coloured Arab, who had been playing very badly the day before, to the Maltese Cat, 'didn't we meet in Abdul Rahman's stable in Bombay four seasons ago? I won the Paikpattan Cup next season, you may remember.'

'Not me,' said the Maltese Cat politely. 'I was at Malta then, pulling a vegetable cart. I don't race. I play the game.'

'O-oh!' said the Arab, cocking his tail and swaggering off.

'Keep yourselves to yourselves,' said the Maltese Cat to his companions. 'We don't want to rub noses with all those goose-rumped half-breeds of Upper India. When we've won this cup they'll give their shoes to know us.'

'We shan't win the cup,' said Shiraz. 'How do you feel?'

'Stale as last night's feed when a musk-rat has run over it,' said Polaris, a rather heavy-shouldered gray, and the rest of the team agreed with him.

'The sooner you forget that the better,' said the Maltese Cat cheerfully. 'They've finished tiffin in the big tent. We shall be wanted now. If your saddles are not comfy, kick. If your bits aren't easy, rear, and let the saises know whether your boots are tight.'

Each pony had his sais, his groom, who lived and ate

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and slept with the pony, and had betted a great deal more than he could afford on the result of the game. There was no chance of anything going wrong, and, to make sure, each sais was shampooing the legs of his pony to the last minute. Behind the saises sat as many of the Skidars' regiment as had leave to attend that match—about half the native officers, and a hundred or two dark, black-bearded men with the regimental pipers nervously fingering the big be-ribboned bagpipes. The Skidars were what they call a Pioneer regiment; and the bagpipes made the national music of half the men. The native officers held bundles of polo-sticks, long cane-handled mallets, and as the grand-stand filled after lunch they arranged themselves by ones and twos at different points round the ground, so that if a stick were broken the player would not have far to ride for a new one. An impatient British cavalry band struck up 'If you want to know the time, ask a p'leeceman!' and the two umpires in light dust-coats danced out on two little excited ponies. The four players of the Archangels' team followed, and the sight of their beautiful mounts made Shiraz groan again.

'Wait till we know,' said the Maltese Cat. 'Two of 'em are playing in blinkers, and that means they can't see to get out of the way of their own side, or they may shy at the umpires' ponies. They've all got white web reins that are sure to stretch or slip!'

'And,' said Kittiwynk, dancing to take the stiffness out of her, 'they carry their whips in their hands instead of on their wrists. Hah!'

'True enough. No man can manage his stick and his reins, and his whip that way,' said the Maltese Cat. 'I've fallen over every square yard of the Malta ground,

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and I ought to know.' He quivered his little flea-bitten withers just to show how satisfied he felt; but his heart was not so light. Ever since he had drifted into India on a troopship, taken, with an old rifle, as part payment for a racing debt, the Maltese Cat had played and preached polo to the Skidars' team on the Skidars' stony polo-ground. Now a polo-pony is like a poet. If he is born with a love for the game he can be made. The Maltese Cat knew that bamboos grew solely in order that polo-balls might be turned from their roots, that grain was given to ponies to keep them in hard condition, and that ponies were shod to prevent them slipping on a turn. But, besides all these things, he knew every trick and device of the finest game of the world, and for two seasons he had been teaching the others all he knew or guessed.

'Remember,' he said for the hundredth time as the riders came up, 'we must play together, and you must play with your heads. Whatever happens, follow the ball. Who goes out first?'

Kittiwynk, Shiraz, Polaris, and a short high little bay fellow with tremendous hocks and no withers worth speaking of (he was called Corks) were being girthed up, and the soldiers in the background stared with all their eyes.

'I want you men to keep quiet,' said Lutyens, the captain of the team, 'and especially not to blow your pipes.'

'Not if we win, Captain Sahib?' asked a piper.

'If we win, you can do what you please,' said Lutyens, with a smile, as he slipped the loop of his stick over his wrist, and wheeled to canter to his place. The Archangels' ponies were a little bit above themselves on

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account of the many-coloured crowd so close to the ground. Their riders were excellent players, but they were a team of crack players instead of a crack team; and that made all the difference in the world. They honestly meant to play together, but it is very hard for four men, each the best of the team he is picked from, to remember that in polo no brilliancy of hitting or riding makes up for playing alone. Their captain shouted his orders to them by name, and it is a curious thing that if you call his name aloud in public after an Englishman you make him hot and fretty. Lutyens said nothing to his men because it had all been said before. He pulled up Shiraz, for he was playing 'back,' to guard the goal. Powell on Polaris was half-back, and Macnamara and Hughes on Corks and Kittiwynk were forwards. The tough bamboo-root ball was put into the middle of the ground one hundred and fifty yards from the ends, and Hughes crossed sticks, heads-up, with the captain of the Archangels, who saw fit to play forward, and that is a place from which you cannot easily control the team. The little click as the cane-shafts met was heard all over the ground, and then Hughes made some sort of quick wrist-stroke that just dribbled the ball a few yards. Kittiwynk knew that stroke of old, and followed as a cat follows a mouse. While the captain of the Archangels was wrenching his pony round Hughes struck with all his strength, and next instant Kittiwynk was away, Corks following close behind her, their little feet pattering like rain-drops on glass.

'Pull out to the left,' said Kittiwynk between her teeth, 'it's coming our way, Corks!'

The back and half-back of the Archangels were tearing down on her just as she was within reach of the ball.

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Hughes leaned forward with a loose rein, and cut it away to the left almost under Kittiwynk's feet, and it hopped and skipped off to Corks, who saw that, if he were not quick, it would run beyond the boundaries. That long bouncing drive gave the Archangels time to wheel and send three men across the ground to head off Corks. Kittiwynk stayed where she was, for she knew the game. Corks was on the ball half a fraction of a second before the others came up, and Macnamara, with a back-handed stroke, sent it back across the ground to Hughes, who saw the way clear to the Archangels' goal, and smacked the ball in before any one quite knew what had happened.

'That's luck,' said Corks, as they changed ends. 'A goal in three minutes for three hits and no riding to speak of.'

'Don't know,' said Polaris. 'We've made 'em angry too soon. Shouldn't wonder if they try to rush us off our feet next time.'

'Keep the ball hanging then,' said Shiraz. 'That wears out every pony that isn't used to it.'

Next time there was no easy galloping across the ground. All the Archangels closed up as one man, but there they stayed, for Corks, Kittiwynk, and Polaris were somewhere on the top of the ball, marking time among the rattling sticks, while Shiraz circled about outside, waiting for a chance.

'We can do this all day,' said Polaris, ramming his quarters into the side of another pony. 'Where do you think you're shoving to?'

'I'll—I'll be driven in an ekka if I know,' was the gasping reply, 'and I'd give a week's feed to get my blinkers off. I can't see anything.'

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'The dust is rather bad. Whew! That was one for my off hock. Where's the ball, Corks?'

'Under my tail. At least a man's looking for it there. This is beautiful. They can't use their sticks, and it's driving 'em wild. Give old blinkers a push and he'll go over!'

'Here, don't touch me! I can't see. I'll—I'll back out, I think,' said the pony in blinkers, who knew that if you can't see all round your head you cannot prop yourself against a shock.

Corks was watching the ball where it lay in the dust close to his near fore, with Macnamara's shortened stick tap-tapping it from time to time. Kittiwynk was edging her way out of the scrimmage, whisking her stump of a tail with nervous excitement.

'Ho! They've got it,' she snorted. 'Let me out!' and she galloped like a rifle-bullet just behind a tall lanky pony of the Archangels, whose rider was swinging up his stick for a stroke.

'Not to-day, thank you,' said Hughes, as the blow slid off his raised stick, and Kittiwynk laid her shoulder to the tall pony's quarters, and shoved him aside just as Lutyens on Shiraz sent the ball where it had come from, and the tall pony went skating and slipping away to the left. Kittiwynk, seeing that Polaris had joined Corks in the chase for the ball up the ground, dropped into Polaris's place, and then time was called.

The Skidars' ponies wasted no time in kicking or fuming. They knew each minute's rest meant so much gain, and trotted off to the rails and their saises, who began to scrape and blanket and rub them at once.

'Whew!' said Corks, stiffening up to get all the tickle

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out of the big vulcanite scraper. 'If we were playing pony for pony we'd bend those Archangels double in half an hour. But they'll bring out fresh ones and fresh ones, and fresh ones after that—you see.'

'Who cares?' said Polaris. 'We've drawn first blood. Is my hock swelling?'

'Looks puffy,' said Corks. 'You must have had rather a wipe. Don't let it stiffen. You'll be wanted again in half an hour.'

'What's the game like?' said the Maltese Cat.

'Ground's like your shoe, except where they've put too much water on it,' said Kittiwynk. 'Then it's slippery. Don't play in the centre. There's a bog there. I don't know how their next four are going to behave, but we kept the ball hanging and made 'em lather for nothing. Who goes out? Two Arabs and a couple of countrybreds! That's bad. What a comfort it is to wash your mouth out!'

Kitty was talking with the neck of a leather-covered soda-water bottle between her teeth and trying to look over her withers at the same time. This gave her a very coquettish air.

'What's bad?' said Gray Dawn, giving to the girth and admiring his well-set shoulders.

'You Arabs can't gallop fast enough to keep yourselves warm—that's what Kitty means,' said Polaris, limping to show that his hock needed attention. 'Are you playing "back," Gray Dawn?'

'Looks like it,' said Gray Dawn, as Lutyens swung himself up. Powell mounted the Rabbit, a plain bay countrybred much like Corks, but with mulish ears. Macnamara took Faiz Ullah, a handy short-backed little red Arab with a long tail, and Hughes mounted Ben-

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ami, an old and sullen brown beast, who stood over in front more than a polo-pony should.

'Benami looks like business,' said Shiraz. 'How's your temper, Ben?' The old campaigner hobbled off without answering, and the Maltese Cat looked at the new Archangel ponies prancing about on the ground. They were four beautiful blacks, and they saddled big enough and strong enough to eat the Skidars' team and gallop away with the meal inside them.

'Blinkers again,' said the Maltese Cat. 'Good enough!'

'They're chargers—cavalry chargers!' said Kittiwynk indignantly. 'They'll never see thirteen three again.'

'They've all been fairly measured and they've all got their certificates,' said the Maltese Cat, 'or they wouldn't be here. We must take things as they come along, and keep our eyes on the ball.'

The game began, but this time the Skidars were penned to their own end of the ground, and the watching ponies did not approve of that.

'Faiz Ullah is shirking as usual,' said Polaris, with a scornful grunt.

'Faiz Ullah is eating whip,' said Corks. They could hear the leather-thonged polo-quirt lacing the little fellow's well-rounded barrel. Then the Rabbit's shrill neigh came across the ground. 'I can't do all the work,' he cried.

'Play the game, don't talk,' the Maltese Cat whickered; and all the ponies wriggled with excitement, and the soldiers and the grooms gripped the railings and shouted. A black pony with blinkers had singled out old Benami, and was interfering with him in every possible way. They could see Benami shaking his head up and down and flapping his underlip.

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‘There’ll be a fall in a minute,’ said Polaris. ‘Benami is getting stuffy.’

The game flickered up and down between goal-post and goal-post, and the black ponies were getting more confident as they felt they had the legs of the others. The ball was hit out of a little scrimmage, and Benami and the Rabbit followed it; Faiz Ullah only too glad to be quiet for an instant.

The blinkered black pony came up like a hawk, with two of his own side behind him, and Benami’s eye glittered as he raced. The question was which pony should make way for the other; each rider was perfectly willing to risk a fall in a good cause. The black who had been driven nearly crazy by his blinkers trusted to his weight and his temper; but Benami knew how to apply his weight and how to keep his temper. They met, and there was a cloud of dust. The black was lying on his side with all the breath knocked out of his body. The Rabbit was a hundred yards up the ground with the ball, and Benami was sitting down. He had slid nearly ten yards, but he had had his revenge, and sat cracking his nostrils till the black pony rose.

‘That’s what you get for interfering. Do you want any more?’ said Benami, and he plunged into the game. Nothing was done because Faiz Ullah would not gallop, though Macnamara beat him whenever he could spare a second. The fall of the black pony had impressed his companions tremendously, and so the Archangels could not profit by Faiz Ullah’s bad behaviour.

But as the Maltese Cat said, when time was called and the four came back blowing and dripping, Faiz Ullah ought to have been kicked all round Umballa. If he did not behave better next time, the Maltese Cat

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promised to pull out his Arab tail by the root and eat it.

There was no time to talk, for the third four were ordered out.

The third quarter of a game is generally the hottest, for each side thinks that the others must be pumped; and most of the winning play in a game is made about that time.

Lutyens took over the Maltese Cat with a pat and a hug, for Lutyens valued him more than anything else in the world. Powell had Shikast, a little gray rat with no pedigree and no manners outside polo; Macnamara mounted Bamboo, the largest of the team, and Hughes took Who's Who, alias The Animal. He was supposed to have Australian blood in his veins, but he looked like a clothes-horse, and you could whack him on the legs with an iron crowbar without hurting him.

They went out to meet the very flower of the Archangels' team, and when Who's Who saw their elegantly booted legs and their beautiful satiny skins he grinned a grin through his light, well-worn bridle.

'My word!' said Who's Who. 'We must give 'em a little football. Those gentlemen need a rubbing down.'

'No biting,' said the Maltese Cat warningly, for once or twice in his career Who's Who had been known to forget himself in that way.

'Who said anything about biting? I'm not playing tiddly-winks. I'm playing the game.'

The Archangels came down like a wolf on the fold, for they were tired of football and they wanted polo. They got it more and more. Just after the game began, Lutyens hit a ball that was coming towards him rapidly, and it rose in the air, as a ball sometimes will, with the

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whirr of a frightened partridge. Shikast heard, but could not see it for the minute, though he looked everywhere and up into the air as the Maltese Cat had taught him. When he saw it ahead and overhead he went forward with Powell as fast as he could put foot to ground. It was then that Powell, a quiet and level-headed man as a rule, became inspired and played a stroke that sometimes comes off successfully on a quiet afternoon of long practice. He took his stick in both hands, and standing up in his stirrups, swiped at the ball in the air, Munipore fashion. There was one second of paralysed astonishment, and then all four sides of the ground went up in a yell of applause and delight as the ball flew true (you could see the amazed Archangels ducking in their saddles to get out of the line of flight, and looking at it with open mouths), and the regimental pipes of the Skidars squealed from the railings as long as the piper had breath.

Shikast heard the stroke; but he heard the head of the stick fly off at the same time. Nine hundred and ninety-nine ponies out of a thousand would have gone tearing on after the ball with a useless player pulling at their heads, but Powell knew him, and he knew Powell; and the instant he felt Powell's right leg shift a trifle on the saddle-flap he headed to the boundary, where a native officer was frantically waving a new stick. Before the shouts had ended Powell was armed again.

Once before in his life the Maltese Cat had heard that very same stroke played off his own back, and had profited by the confusion it made. This time he acted on experience, and leaving Bamboo to guard the goal in case of accidents, came through the others like a flash, head and tail low, Lutyens standing up to ease him—

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swept on and on before the other side knew what was the matter, and nearly pitched on his head between the Archangels' goal-posts as Lutyens tipped the ball in after a straight scurry of a hundred and fifty yards. If there was one thing more than another upon which the Maltese Cat prided himself it was on this quick, streaking kind of run half across the ground. He did not believe in taking balls round the field unless you were clearly overmatched. After this they gave the Archangels five minutes' football, and an expensive fast pony hates football because it rumples his temper.

Who's Who showed himself even better than Polaris in this game. He did not permit any wriggling away, but bored joyfully into the scrimmage as if he had his nose in a feed-box, and were looking for something nice. Little Shikast jumped on the ball the minute it got clear, and every time an Archangel pony followed it he found Shikast standing over it asking what was the matter.

'If we can live through this quarter,' said the Maltese Cat, 'I shan't care. Don't take it out of yourselves. Let them do the lathering.'

So the ponies, as their riders explained afterwards, 'shut up.' The Archangels kept them tied fast in front of their goal, but it cost the Archangels' ponies all that was left of their tempers; and ponies began to kick, and men began to repeat compliments, and they chopped at the legs of Who's Who, and he set his teeth and stayed where he was, and the dust stood up like a tree over the scrimmage till that hot quarter ended.

They found the ponies very excited and confident when they went to their saises; and the Maltese Cat had to warn them that the worst of the game was coming.

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‘Now we are all going in for the second time,’ said he, ‘and they are trotting out fresh ponies. You’ll think you can gallop, but you’ll find you can’t; and then you’ll be sorry.’

‘But two goals to nothing is a halter-long lead,’ said Kittiwynk prancing.

‘How long does it take to get a goal?’ the Maltese Cat answered. ‘For pity sake, don’t run away with the notion that the game is half-won just because we happen to be in luck now. They’ll ride you into the grand-stand if they can; you must not give ’em a chance. Follow the ball.’

‘Football as usual?’ said Polaris. ‘My hock’s half as big as a nose-bag.’

‘Don’t let them have a look at the ball if you can help it. Now leave me alone. I must get all the rest I can before the last quarter.’

He hung down his head and let all his muscles go slack; Shikast, Bamboo, and Who’s Who copying his example.

‘Better not watch the game,’ he said. ‘We aren’t playing, and we shall only take it out of ourselves if we grow anxious. Look at the ground and pretend it’s fly-time.’

They did their best, but it was hard advice to follow. The hoofs were drumming and the sticks were rattling all up and down the ground, and yells of applause from the English troops told that the Archangels were pressing the Skidars hard. The native soldiers behind the ponies groaned and grunted, and said things in undertones, and presently they heard a long-drawn shout and a clatter of hurrahs!

‘One to the Archangels,’ said Shikast, without raising his head. ‘Time’s nearly up. Oh, my sire and—dam!’

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'Faiz Ullah,' said the Maltese Cat, 'if you don't play to the last nail in your shoes this time, I'll kick you on the ground before all the other ponies.'

'I'll do my best when my time comes,' said the little Arab sturdily.

The saises looked at each other gravely as they rubbed their ponies' legs. This was the first time when long purses began to tell, and everybody knew it. Kittiwynk and the others came back with the sweat dripping over their hoofs and their tails telling sad stories.

'They're better than we are,' said Shiraz. 'I knew how it would be.'

'Shut your big head,' said the Maltese Cat; 'we've one goal to the good yet.'

'Yes, but it's two Arabs and two countrybreds to play now,' said Corks. 'Faiz Ullah, remember!' He spoke in a biting voice.

As Lutyens mounted Gray Dawn he looked at his men, and they did not look pretty. They were covered with dust and sweat in streaks. Their yellow boots were almost black, their wrists were red and lumpy, and their eyes seemed two inches deep in their heads, but the expression in the eyes was satisfactory.

'Did you take anything at tiffin?' said Lutyens, and the team shook their heads. They were too dry to talk.

'All right. The Archangels did. They are worse pumped than we are.'

'They've got the better ponies,' said Powell. 'I shan't be sorry when this business is over.'

That fifth quarter was a sad one in every way. Faiz Ullah played like a little red demon; and the Rabbit seemed to be everywhere at once, and Benami rode straight at anything and everything that came in his

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way, while the umpires on their ponies wheeled like gulls outside the shifting game. But the Archangels had the better mounts—they had kept their racers till late in the game—and never allowed the Skidars to play football. They hit the ball up and down the width of the ground till Benami and the rest were outpaced. Then they went forward, and time and again Lutyens and Gray Dawn were just, and only just, able to send the ball away with a long splitting backhander. Gray Dawn forgot that he was an Arab; and turned from gray to blue as he galloped. Indeed, he forgot too well, for he did not keep his eyes on the ground as an Arab should, but stuck out his nose and scuttled for the dear honour of the game. They had watered the ground once or twice between the quarters, and a careless waterman had emptied the last of his skinful all in one place near the Skidars' goal. It was close to the end of play, and for the tenth time Gray Dawn was bolting after a ball when his near hind foot slipped on the greasy mud and he rolled over and over, pitching Lutyens just clear of the goal-post; and the triumphant Archangels made their goal. Then time was called—two goals all; but Lutyens had to be helped up, and Gray Dawn rose with his near hind leg strained somewhere.

'What's the damage?' said Powell, his arm round Lutyens.

'Collar-bone, of course,' said Lutyens between his teeth. It was the third time he had broken it in two years, and it hurt him.

Powell and the others whistled. 'Game's up,' said Hughes.

'Hold on. We've five good minutes yet, and it isn't my right hand,' said Lutyens. 'We'll stick it out.'

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'I say,' said the captain of the Archangels, trotting up. 'Are you hurt, Lutyens? We'll wait if you care to put in a substitute. I wish—I mean—the fact is, you fellows deserve this game if any team does. Wish we could give you a man or some of our ponies—or something.'

'You're awfully good, but we'll play to a finish, I think.'

The captain of the Archangels stared for a little. 'That's not half bad,' he said, and went back to his own side, while Lutyens borrowed a scarf from one of his native officers and made a sling of it. Then an Archangel galloped up with a big bath-sponge and advised Lutyens to put it under his arm-pit to ease his shoulder, and between them they tied up his left arm scientifically, and one of the native officers leaped forward with four long glasses that fizzed and bubbled.

The team looked at Lutyens piteously, and he nodded. It was the last quarter, and nothing would matter after that. They drank out the dark golden drink, and wiped their moustaches, and things looked more hopeful.

The Maltese Cat had put his nose into the front of Lutyens' shirt, and was trying to say how sorry he was.

'He knows,' said Lutyens, proudly. 'The beggar knows. I've played him without a bridle before now—for fun.'

'It's no fun now,' said Powell. 'But we haven't a decent substitute.'

'No,' said Lutyens. 'It's the last quarter, and we've got to make our goal and win. I'll trust the Cat.'

'If you fall this time you'll suffer a little,' said Macnamara.

'I'll trust the Cat,' said Lutyens.

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‘You hear that?’ said the Maltese Cat proudly to the others. ‘It’s worth while playing polo for ten years to have that said of you. Now then, my sons, come along. We’ll kick up a little bit, just to show the Archangels this team haven’t suffered.’

And, sure enough, as they went on to the ground the Maltese Cat, after satisfying himself that Lutyens was home in the saddle, kicked out three or four times, and Lutyens laughed. The reins were caught up anyhow in the tips of his strapped hand, and he never pretended to rely on them. He knew the Cat would answer to the least pressure of the leg, and by way of showing off—for his shoulder hurt him very much—he bent the little fellow in a close figure-of-eight in and out between the goal-posts. There was a roar from the native officers and men, who dearly loved a piece of dugabashi (horse-trick work), as they called it, and the pipes very quietly and scornfully droned out the first bars of a common bazaar-tune called ‘Freshly Fresh and Newly New,’ just as a warning to the other regiments that the Skidars were fit. All the natives laughed.

‘And now,’ said the Cat, as they took their place, ‘remember that this is the last quarter, and follow the ball!’

‘Don’t need to be told,’ said Who’s Who.

‘Let me go on. All those people on all four sides will begin to crowd in—just as they did at Malta. You’ll hear people calling out, and moving forward and being pushed back, and that is going to make the Archangel ponies very unhappy. But if a ball is struck to the boundary, you go after it, and let the people get out of your way. I went over the pole of a four-in-hand once, and picked a game out of the dust by it. Back me up when I run, and follow the ball.’

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There was a sort of an all-round sound of sympathy and wonder as the last quarter opened, and then there began exactly what the Maltese Cat had foreseen. People crowded in close to the boundaries, and the Archangels' ponies kept looking sideways at the narrowing space. If you know how a man feels to be cramped at tennis—not because he wants to run out of the court, but because he likes to know that he can at a pinch—you will guess how ponies must feel when they are playing in a box of human beings.

'I'll bend some of those men if I can get away,' said Who's Who, as he rocketed behind the ball; and Bamboo nodded without speaking. They were playing the last ounce in them, and the Maltese Cat had left the goal undefended to join them. Lutyens gave him every order that he could to bring him back, but this was the first time in his career that the little wise gray had ever played polo on his own responsibility, and he was going to make the most of it.

'What are you doing here?' said Hughes, as the Cat crossed in front of him and rode off an Archangel.

'The Cat's in charge—mind the goal!' shouted Lutyens, and bowing forward hit the ball full, and followed on, forcing the Archangels towards their own goal.

'No football,' said the Cat. 'Keep the ball by the boundaries and cramp 'em. Play open order and drive 'em to the boundaries.'

Across and across the ground in big diagonals flew the ball, and whenever it came to a flying rush and a stroke close to the boundaries the Archangel ponies moved stiffly. They did not care to go headlong at a wall of men and carriages, though if the ground had been open they could have turned on a sixpence.

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‘Wriggle her up the sides,’ said the Cat. ‘Keep her close to the crowd. They hate the carriages. Shikast, keep her up this side.’

Shikast with Powell lay left and right behind the uneasy scuffle of an open scrimmage, and every time the ball was hit away Shikast galloped on it at such an angle that Powell was forced to hit it towards the boundary; and when the crowd had been driven away from that side, Lutyens would send the ball over to the other, and Shikast would slide desperately after it till his friends came down to help. It was billiards, and no football, this time—billiards in a corner pocket; and the cues were not well chalked.

‘If they get us out in the middle of the ground they’ll walk away from us. Dribble her along the sides,’ cried the Cat.

So they dribbled all along the boundary, where a pony could not come on their right-hand side; and the Archangels were furious, and the umpires had to neglect the game to shout at the people to get back, and several blundering mounted policemen tried to restore order, all close to the scrimmage, and the nerves of the Archangels’ ponies stretched and broke like cobwebs.

Five or six times an Archangel hit the ball up into the middle of the ground, and each time the watchful Shikast gave Powell his chance to send it back, and after each return, when the dust had settled, men could see that the Skidars had gained a few yards.

Every now and again there were shouts of ‘Side! Off side!’ from the spectators; but the teams were too busy to care, and the umpires had all they could do to keep their maddened ponies clear of the scuffle.

At last Lutyens missed a short easy stroke, and the

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Skidars had to fly back helter-skelter to protect their own goal, Shikast leading. Powell stopped the ball with a backhander when it was not fifty yards from the goal-posts, and Shikast spun round with a wrench that nearly hoisted Powell out of his saddle.

‘Now’s our last chance,’ said the Cat, wheeling like a cock-chafer on a pin. ‘We’ve got to ride it out. Come along.’

Lutyens felt the little chap take a deep breath, and, as it were, crouch under his rider. The ball was hopping towards the right-hand boundary, an Archangel riding for it with both spurs and a whip; but neither spur nor whip would make his pony stretch himself as he neared the crowd. The Maltese Cat glided under his very nose, picking up his hind legs sharp, for there was not a foot to spare between his quarters and the other pony’s bit. It was as neat an exhibition as fancy figure-skating. Lutyens hit with all the strength he had left, but the stick slipped a little in his hand, and the ball flew off to the left instead of keeping close to the boundary. Who’s Who was far across the ground, thinking hard as he galloped. He repeated, stride for stride, the Cat’s manœuvres with another Archangel pony, nipping the ball away from under his bridle, and clearing his opponent by half a fraction of an inch, for Who’s Who was clumsy behind. Then he drove away towards the right as the Maltese Cat came up from the left; and Bamboo held a middle course exactly between them. The three were making a sort of Government-broad-arrow-shaped attack; and there was only the Archangels’ back to guard the goal; but immediately behind them were three Archangels racing all they knew, and mixed up with them was Powell, sending Shikast along on what

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he felt was their last hope. It takes a very good man to stand up to the rush of seven crazy ponies in the last quarters of a cup game, when men are riding with their necks for sale, and the ponies are delirious. The Archangels' back missed his stroke, and pulled aside just in time to let the rush go by. Bamboo and Who's Who shortened stride to give the Maltese Cat room, and Lutyens got the goal with a clean, smooth, smacking stroke that was heard all over the field. But there was no stopping the ponies. They poured through the goal-posts in one mixed mob, winners and losers together, for the pace had been terrific. The Maltese Cat knew by experience what would happen, and, to save Lutyens, turned to the right with one last effort that strained a back-sinew beyond hope of repair. As he did so he heard the right-hand goal-post crack as a pony cannoned into it—crack, splinter, and fall like a mast. It had been sawed three parts through in case of accidents, but it upset the pony nevertheless, and he blundered into another, who blundered into the left-hand post, and then there was confusion and dust and wood. Bamboo was lying on the ground, seeing stars; an Archangel pony rolled beside him, breathless and angry; Shikast had sat down dog-fashion to avoid falling over the others, and was sliding along on his little bobtail in a cloud of dust; and Powell was sitting on the ground, hammering with his stick and trying to cheer. All the others were shouting at the top of what was left of their voices, and the men who had been spilt were shouting too. As soon as the people saw no one was hurt, ten thousand native and English shouted and clapped and yelled, and before any one could stop them the pipers of the Skidars broke on to the ground, with all the native officers and

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men behind them, and marched up and down, playing a wild northern tune called 'Zakhme Bagan,' and through the insolent blaring of the pipes and the high-pitched native yells you could hear the Archangels' band hammering, 'For they are all jolly good fellows,' and then reproachfully to the losing team, 'Ooh, Kafoozalum! Kafoozalum! Kafoozalum!'

Besides all these things and many more, there was a Commander-in-Chief, and an Inspector-General of Cavalry, and the principal veterinary officer in all India, standing on the top of a regimental coach, yelling like schoolboys; and brigadiers and colonels and commissioners, and hundreds of pretty ladies joined the chorus. But the Maltese Cat stood with his head down, wondering how many legs were left to him; and Lutyens watched the men and ponies pick themselves out of the wreck of the two goal-posts, and he patted the Cat very tenderly.

'I say,' said the captain of the Archangels, spitting a pebble out of his mouth, 'will you take three thousand for that pony—as he stands?'

'No, thank you. I've an idea he's saved my life,' said Lutyens, getting off and lying down at full length. Both teams were on the ground too, waving their boots in the air, and coughing and drawing deep breaths, as the saises ran up to take away the ponies, and an officious water-carrier sprinkled the players with dirty water till they sat up.

'My Aunt!' said Powell, rubbing his back and looking at the stumps of the goal-posts, 'that was a game!'

They played it over again, every stroke of it, that night at the big dinner, when the Free-for-All Cup was filled and passed down the table, and emptied and filled again, and everybody made most eloquent speeches.

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About two in the morning, when there might have been some singing, a wise little, plain little, gray little head looked in through the open door.

‘Hurrah! Bring him in,’ said the Archangels; and his sais, who was very happy indeed, patted the Maltese Cat on the flank, and he limped into the blaze of light and the glittering uniforms, looking for Lutyens. He was used to messes, and men’s bedrooms, and places where ponies are not usually encouraged, and in his youth had jumped on and off a mess-table for a bet. So he behaved himself very politely, and ate bread dipped in salt, and was petted all round the table, moving gingerly; and they drank his health, because he had done more to win the Cup than any man or horse on the ground.

That was glory and honour enough for the rest of his days, and the Maltese Cat did not complain much when his veterinary surgeon said that he would be no good for polo any more. When Lutyens married, his wife did not allow him to play, so he was forced to be an umpire; and his pony on these occasions was a flea-bitten gray with a neat polo-tail, lame all round, but desperately quick on his feet, and, as everybody knew, Past Pluperfect Prestissimo Player of the Game.

‘BREAD UPON THE WATERS’

(1896)

IF you remember my improper friend Brugglesmith, you will also bear in mind his friend McPhee, Chief Engineer of the ‘Breslau,’ whose dingey Brugglesmith tried to steal. His apologies for the performance of Brugglesmith may one day be told in their proper place: the tale before us concerns McPhee. He was never a racing engineer, and took special pride in saying as much before the Liverpool men; but he had a thirty-two years’ knowledge of machinery and the humours of ships. One side of his face had been wrecked through the bursting of a water-gauge in the days when men knew less than they do now; and his nose rose grandly out of the wreck, like a club in a public riot. There were cuts and lumps on his head, and he would guide your forefinger through his short iron-gray hair and tell you how he had come by his trade-marks. He owned all sorts of certificates of extra-competency, and at the bottom of his cabin chest of drawers, where he kept the photograph of his wife, were two or three Royal Humane Society medals for saving lives at sea. Professionally—it was different when crazy steerage-passengers jumped overboard—professionally, McPhee does not approve of saving life at sea, and he has often told me that a new hell is awaiting stokers and trimmers who sign for a

strong man’s pay and fall sick the second day out. He believes in throwing boots at fourth and fifth engineers when they wake him up at night with word that a bearing is red-hot, all because a lamp’s glare is reflected red from the twirling metal. He believes that there are only two poets in the world; one being Robert Burns, of course, and the other Gerald Massey. When he has time for novels he reads Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade—chiefly the latter—and knows whole pages of ‘Hard Cash’ by heart. In the saloon his table is next to the captain’s, and he drinks only water while his engines work.

He was good to me when we first met, because I did not ask questions, and believed in Charles Reade as a most shamefully neglected author. Later he approved of my writings to the extent of one pamphlet of twenty-four pages that I wrote for Holdock, Steiner, and Chase, owners of the line, when they bought some ventilating patent and fitted it to the cabins of the ‘Breslau,’ ‘Spandau,’ and ‘Koltzau.’ The purser of the ‘Breslau’ recommended me to Holdock’s secretary for the job; and Holdock, who is a Wesleyan Methodist, invited me to his house, and gave me dinner with the governess when the others had finished, and placed the plans and specifications in my hand, and I wrote the pamphlet that same afternoon. It was called ‘Comfort in the Cabin,’ and brought me seven pound ten, cash down—an important sum of money in those days; and the governess, who was teaching Master John Holdock his scales, told me that Mrs. Holdock had told her to keep an eye on me, in case I went away with coats from the hat-rack. McPhee liked that pamphlet enormously, for it was composed in the Bouverie-Byzantine style, with baroque and rococo

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embellishments; and afterward he introduced me to Mrs. McPhee, who succeeded Dinah in my heart; for Dinah was half a world away, and it is wholesome and antiseptic to love such a woman as Janet McPhee. They lived in a little twelve-pound house, close to the shipping. When McPhee was away Mrs. McPhee read the Lloyd's column in the papers, and called on the wives of senior engineers of equal social standing. Once or twice, too, Mrs. Holdock visited Mrs. McPhee in a brougham with celluloid fittings, and I have reason to believe that, after she had played owner's wife long enough, they talked scandal. The Holdocks lived in an old-fashioned house with a big brick garden not a mile from the McPhees, for they stayed by their money as their money stayed by them; and in summer you met their brougham solemnly junketing by Theydon Bois or Loughton. But I was Mrs. McPhee's friend, for she allowed me to convoy her westward, sometimes, to theatres, where she sobbed or laughed or shivered with a simple heart; and she introduced me to a new world of doctors' wives, captains' wives, and engineers' wives, whose whole talk and thought centred in and about ships and lines of ships you have never heard of. There were sailing-ships, with stewards and mahogany and maple saloons, trading to Australia, taking cargoes of consumptives and hopeless drunkards for whom a sea-voyage was recommended; there were frouzy little West African boats, full of rats and cockroaches, where men died anywhere but in their bunks; there were Brazilian boats whose cabins could be hired for merchandise that went out loaded nearly awash; there were Zanzibar and Mauritius steamers, and wonderful reconstructed boats that plied to the other side of Borneo. These were

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loved and known, for they earned our bread and a little butter, and we despised the big Atlantic boats, and made fun of the P. and O. and Orient liners, and swore by our respected owners—Wesleyan, Baptist, or Presbyterian, as the case might be.

I had only just come back to England when Mrs. McPhee invited me to dinner at three o'clock in the afternoon, and the notepaper was almost bridal in its scented creaminess. When I reached the house I saw that there were new curtains in the window that must have cost forty-five shillings a pair; and as Mrs. McPhee drew me into the little marble-paper hall, she looked at me keenly, and cried:

‘Have ye not heard? What d’ye think o’ the hat-rack?’

Now, that hat-rack was oak—thirty shillings at least. McPhee came downstairs with a sober foot—he steps as lightly as a cat, for all his weight, when he is at sea—and shook hands in a new and awful manner—a parody of old Holdock’s style when he says good-bye to his skip-pers. I perceived at once that a legacy had come to him, but I held my peace, though Mrs. McPhee begged me every thirty seconds to eat a great deal and say nothing. It was rather a mad sort of meal, because McPhee and his wife took hold of hands like little children (they always do after voyages), and nodded and winked and choked and gurgled, and hardly ate a mouthful.

A female servant came in and waited; though Mrs. McPhee had told me time and again that she would thank no one to do her housework while she had her health. But this was a servant with a cap, and I saw Mrs. McPhee swell and swell under her garance-coloured

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gown. There is no small free-board to Janet McPhee, nor is garance any subdued tint; and with all this unexplained pride and glory in the air I felt like watching fireworks without knowing the festival. When the maid had removed the cloth she brought a pineapple that would have cost half a guinea at that season (only McPhee has his own way of getting such things), and a Canton china bowl of dried lichis, and a glass plate of preserved ginger, and a small jar of sacred and imperial chow-chow that perfumed the room. McPhee gets it from a Dutchman in Java, and I think he doctors it with liqueurs. But the crown of the feast was some Madeira of the kind you can only come by if you know the wine and the man. A little maize-wrapped fig of clotted Madeira cigars went with the wine, and the rest was a pale-blue smoky silence; Janet, in her splendour, smiling on us two, and patting McPhee's hand.

'We'll drink,' said McPhee slowly, rubbing his chin, 'to the eternal damnation o' Holdock, Steiner, and Chase.'

Of course I answered 'Amen,' though I had made seven pound ten shillings out of the firm. McPhee's enemies were mine, and I was drinking his Madeira.

'Ye've heard nothing?' said Janet. 'Not a word, not a whisper?'

'Not a word, nor a whisper. On my word, I have not.'

'Tell him, Mac,' said she; and that is another proof of Janet's goodness and wifely love. A smaller woman would have babbled first, but Janet is five feet nine in her stockings.

'We're rich,' said McPhee. I shook hands all round.

'We're damned rich,' he added. I shook hands all round a second time.

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‘I’ll go to sea no more—unless—there’s no sayin’—a private yacht, maybe—wi’ a small an’ handy auxiliary.’

‘It’s not enough for that,’ said Janet. ‘We’re fair rich—well-to-do, but no more. A new gown for church, and one for the theatre. We’ll have it made west.’

‘How much is it?’ I asked.

‘Twenty-five thousand pounds.’ I drew a long breath. ‘An’ I’ve been earnin’ twenty-five an’ twenty pound a month!’ The last words came away with a roar, as though the wide world was conspiring to beat him down.

‘All this time I’m waiting,’ I said. ‘I know nothing since last September. Was it left you?’

They laughed aloud together. ‘It was left,’ said McPhee, choking. ‘Ou, ay, it was left. That’s vara good. Of course it was left. Janet, d’ye note that? It was left. Now if you’d put that in your pamphlet it would have been vara jocose. It was left.’ He slapped his thigh and roared till the wine quivered in the decanter.

The Scotch are a great people, but they are apt to hang over a joke too long, particularly when no one can see the point but themselves.

‘When I rewrite my pamphlet I’ll put it in, McPhee. Only I must know something more first.’

McPhee thought for the length of half a cigar, while Janet caught my eye and led it round the room to one new thing after another—the new vine-pattern carpet, the new chiming rustic clock between the models of the Colombo outrigger-boats, the new inlaid sideboard with a purple cut-glass flower-stand, the fender of gilt and brass, and last, the new black-and-gold piano.

‘In October o’ last year the Board sacked me,’ began

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McPhee. 'In October o' last year the "Breslau" came in for winter overhaul. She'd been runnin' eight months—two hunder an' forty days—an' I was three days makin' up my indents, when she went to dry-dock. All told, mark you, it was this side o' three hunder pound—to be preceese, two hunder an' eighty-six pound four shillings. There's not another man could ha' nursed the "Breslau" for eight months to that tune. Never again—never again! They may send their boats to the bottom, for aught I care.'

'There's no need,' said Janet softly. 'We're done wi' Holdock, Steiner, and Chase.'

'It's irritatin', Janet, it's just irritatin'. I ha' been justified from first to last, as the world knows, but—but I canna' forgie 'em. Ay, wisdom is justified o' her children; an' any other man than me wad ha' made the indent eight hunder. Hay was our skipper—ye'll have met him. They shifted him to the "Torgau," an' bade me wait for the "Breslau" under young Bannister. Ye'll obsairve there'd been a new election on the Board. I heard the shares were sellin' hither an' yon, an' the major part of the Board was new to me. The old Board would ne'er ha' done it. They trusted me. But the new Board was all for reorganisation. Young Steiner—Steiner's son—the Jew, was at the bottom of it, an' they did not think it worth their while to send me word. The first I knew—an' I was Chief Engineer—was the notice of the line's winter sailin's, and the "Breslau" timed for sixteen days between port an' port! Sixteen days, man! She's a good boat, but eighteen is her summer time, mark you. Sixteen was sheer, flytin', kitin' nonsense, an' so I told young Bannister.

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““We’ve got to make it,” he said. “Ye should not ha’ sent in a three-hunder-pound indent.”

““Do they look for their boats to be run on air?” I said. “The Board is daft.”

““E’en tell ’em so,” he says. “I’m a married man, an’ my fourth’s on the ways now, she says.””

‘A boy—wi’ red hair,’ Janet put in. Her own hair is the splendid red-gold that goes with a creamy complexion.

‘My word, I was an angry man that day! Forbye I was fond o’ the old “Breslau,” I look for a little consideration from the Board after twenty years’ service. There was Board meetin’ on Wednesday; an’ I sat overnight in the engine-room, takin’ figures to support my case. Well, I put it fair and square before them all. “Gentlemen,” I said, “I’ve run the ‘Breslau’ eight seasons, an’ I believe there’s no fault to find wi’ my wark. But if ye haud to this”—I waggled the advertisement at ’em—“this that I’ve never heard of till I read it at breakfast, I do assure you on my professional reputation, she can never do it. That is to say, she can for a while, but at a risk no thinkin’ man would run.”

““What the deil d’ye suppose we pass your indent for?” says old Holdock. “Man, we’re spendin’ money like watter.”

““I’ll leave it in the Board’s hands,” I said, “if two hunder an’ eighty-seven pound is anything beyond right and reason for eight months.” I might ha’ saved my breath, for the Board was new since the last election, an’ there they sat, the damned deevidend-huntin’ ship-chandlers, deaf as the adders o’ Scripture.

““We must keep faith wi’ the public,” said young Steiner.

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“Keep faith wi’ the ‘Breslau’ then,” I said. “She’s served you well, an’ your father before you. She’ll need her bottom restiffenin’, an’ new bed-plates, an’ turnin’ out the forward boilers, an’ re-borin’ all three cylinders, an’ refacin’ all guides, to begin with. It’s a three months’ job.”

“Because one employee is afraid?” says young Steiner. “Maybe a piano in the Chief Engineer’s cabin would be more to the point.”

‘I crushed my cap in my hands, an’ thanked God we’d no bairns an’ a bit put by.

“Understand, gentlemen,” I said. “If the ‘Breslau’ is made a sixteen-day boat, ye’ll find another engineer.”

“Bannister makes no objection,” said Holdock.

“I’m speakin’ for myself,” I said. “Bannister has bairns.” An’ then I lost my temper. “Ye can run her into Hell an’ out again if ye pay pilotage,” I said, “but ye run without me.”

“That’s insolence,” said young Steiner.

“At your pleasure,” I said, turnin’ to go.

“Ye can consider yourself dismissed. We must preserve discipline among our employees,” said old Holdock, an’ he looked round to see that the Board was with him. They knew nothin’—God forgie ’em—an’ they nodded me out o’ the Line after twenty years—after twenty years.

‘I went out an’ sat down by the hall porter to get my wits again. I’m thinkin’ I swore at the Board. Then auld McRimmon—o’ McNaughton and McRimmon—came oot o’ his office, that’s on the same floor, an’ looked at me, proppin’ up one eyelid wi’ his forefinger. Ye know they call him the Blind Deevil, forbye he’s onythin’ but

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blind, an’ no deevil in his dealin’s wi’ me—McRimmon o’ the Black Bird Line.

“What’s here, Mister McPhee?” said he.

“I was past prayin’ for by then. “A Chief Engineer sacked after twenty years’ service because he’ll not risk the ‘Breslau’ on the new timin’, an’ be damned to ye, McRimmon,” I said.

“The auld man sucked in his lips an’ whistled. “Ah,” said he, “the new timin’. I see!” He doddered into the Board-room I’d just left, an’ the Dandie-dog that is just his blind man’s leader stayed wi’ me. That was providential. In a minute he was back again. “Ye’ve cast your bread on the watter, McPhee, an’ be damned to you,” he says. “Whaur’s my dog? My word, is he on your knee? There’s more discernment in a dog than a Jew. What garred ye curse your Board, McPhee? It’s expensive.”

““They’ll pay more for the ‘Breslau,’” I said. “Get off my knee, ye smotherin’ beastie.”

““Bearin’s hot, eh?” said McRimmon. “It’s thirty year since a man daur curse me to my face. Time was I’d ha’ cast ye doon the stairway for that.”

““Forgie’s all!” I said. He was wearin’ to eighty, as I knew. “I was wrong, McRimmon; but when a man’s shown the door for doin’ his plain duty he’s not always ceevil.”

““So I hear,” says McRimmon. “Ha’ ye ony objection to a tramp freighter? It’s only fifteen a month, but they say the Blind Deevil feeds a man better than others. She’s my ‘Kite.’ Come ben. Ye can thank Dandie, here. I’m no used to thanks. An’ noo,” says he, “what possessed ye to throw up your berth wi’ Holdock?”

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“The new timin’,” said I. “The ‘Breslau’ will not stand it.”

“Hoot, oot,” said he. “Ye might ha’ crammed her a little—enough to show ye were drivin’ her—an’ brought her in twa days behind. What’s easier than to say ye slowed for bearin’s, eh? All my men do it, and—I believe ’em.”

“McRimmon,” says I, “what’s her virginity to a lassie?”

“He puckered his dry face an’ twisted in his chair. “The warld an’ a’,” says he. “My God, the vara warld an’ a’! But what ha’ you or me to do wi’ virginity, this late along?”

“This,” I said. “There’s just one thing that each one of us in his trade or profession will not do for ony consideration whatever. If I run to time I run to time, barrin’ always the risks o’ the high seas. Less than that, under God, I have not done. More than that, by God, I will not do! There’s no trick o’ the trade I’m not acquaint wi’—”

“So I’ve heard,” says McRimmon, dry as a biscuit.

“But yon matter o’ fair runnin’ ’s just my Shekinah, ye’ll understand. I daurna tamper wi’ that. Nursing weak engines is fair craftsmanship; but what the Board ask is cheatin’, wi’ the risk o’ manslaughter addeetional. Ye’ll note I know my business.”

“There was some more talk, an’ next week I went aboard the “Kite,” twenty-five hunder ton, ordinary compound, a Black Bird tramp. The deeper she rode, the better she’d steam. I’ve snapped as much as nine out of her, but eight point three was her fair normal. Good food forward an’ better aft, all indents passed wi’ out marginal remarks, the best coal, new donkeys, and

good crews. There was nothin’ the old man would not do, except paint. That was his deeficulty. Ye could no more draw paint than his last teeth from him. He’d come down to dock, an’ his boats a scandal all along the watter, an’ he’d whine an’ cry an’ say they looked all he could desire. Every owner has his non plus ultra, I’ve obsairved. Paint was McRimmon’s. But you could get round his engines without riskin’ your life, an’, for all his blindness, I’ve seen him reject five flawed intermediates, one after the other, on a nod from me; an’ his cattle-fittin’s were guaranteed for North Atlantic winter weather. Ye ken what that means? McRimmon an’ the Black Bird Line, God bless him!

‘Oh, I forgot to say she would lie down an’ fill her forward deck green, an’ snore away into a twenty-knot gale forty-five to the minute, three an’ a half knots an hour, the engines runnin’ sweet an’ true as a bairn breathin’ in its sleep. Bell was skipper; an’ forbye there’s no love lost between crews an’ owners, we were fond o’ the auld Blind Deevil an’ his dog, an’ I’m thinkin’ he liked us. He was worth the windy side o’ twa million sterlin’, an’ no friend to his own blood-kin. Money’s an awfu’ thing—overmuch—for a lonely man.

‘I’d taken her out twice, there an’ back again, when word came o’ the “Breslau’s” breakdown, just as I prophesied. Calder was her engineer—he’s not fit to run a tug down the Solent—and he fairly lifted the engines off the bed-plates, an’ they fell down in heaps, by what I heard. So she filled from the after-stuffin’-box to the after-bulkhead, an’ lay star-gazing, with seventy-nine squealin’ passengers in the saloon, till the “Camar-alzaman” o’ Ramsey and Gold’s Carthagena Line gave her a tow to the tune o’ five thousand seven hunder an’

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forty pound, wi' costs in the Admiralty Court. She was helpless, ye'll understand, an' in no case to meet ony weather. Five thousand seven hunder an' forty pounds, with costs, an' exclusive o' new engines! They ha' done better to ha' kept me—on the old timin'.

'But, even so, the new Board were all for retrenchment. Young Steiner, the Jew, was at the bottom of it. They sacked men right an' left that would not eat the dirt the Board gave 'em. They cut down repairs; they fed crews wi' leavin's and scrapin's; and, reversin' McRimmon's practice, they hid their defeeciencies wi' paint an' cheap gildin'. "Quem Deus vult perdrere prius dementat," ye remember.

'In January we went to dry-dock, an' in the next dock lay the "Grotkau," their big freighter that was the "Dolabella" o' Piegan, Piegan, and Walsh's Line in '84—a Clyde-built iron boat, a flat-bottomed, pigeon-breasted, under-engined, bull-nosed bitch of a five-thousand-ton freighter, that would neither steer, nor steam, nor stop when ye asked her. Whiles she'd attend to her helm, whiles she'd take charge, whiles she'd wait to scratch herself, an' whiles she'd buttock into a dock-head. But Holdock and Steiner had bought her cheap, and painted her all over like the Hoor o' Babylon, an' we called her the "Hoor" for short.' (By the way, McPhee kept to that name throughout the rest of his tale; so you must read accordingly.) 'I went to see young Bannister—he had to take what the Board gave him, an' he an' Calder were shifted together from the "Breslau" to this abortion—an' talkin' to him I went into the dock under her. Her plates were pitted till the men that were paint, paint, paintin' her laughed at it. But the warst was at the last. She'd a great clumsy

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iron nineteen-foot Thresher propeller—Aitcheson designed the “Kite’s”—and just on the tail o’ the shaft, before the boss, was a red weepin’ crack ye could ha’ put a penknife to. Man, it was an awful crack!

“When d’ye ship a new tail-shaft?” I said to Bannister.

“He knew what I meant. “Oh, yon’s a superfecial flaw,” says he, not lookin’ at me.

““Superfecial Gehenna!” I said. “Ye’ll not take her oot wi’ a solution o’ continuity that like.”

““They’ll putty it up this evening,” he said. “I’m a married man, an’—ye used to know the Board.”

“I e’en said what was gie’d me in that hour. Ye know how a dry-dock echoes. I saw young Steiner standin’ listenin’ above me, an’, man, he used language provocative of a breach o’ the peace. I was a spy and a disgraced employee, an’ a corrupter o’ young Bannister’s morals, an’ he’d persecute me for libel. He went away when I ran up the steps—I’d ha’ thrown him into the dock if I’d caught him—an’ there I met McRimmon, wi’ Dandie pullin’ on the chain, guidin’ the auld man among the railway lines.

““McPhee,” said he, “ye’re no paid to fight Holdock, Steiner, Chase, and Company, Limited, when ye meet. What’s wrong between you?”

““No more than a tail-shaft rotten as a kail-stump. For ony sakes go and look, McRimmon. It’s a comedietta.”

““I’m feared o’ yon conversational Hebrew,” said he. “Whaur’s the flaw, an’ what like?”

““A seven-inch crack just behind the boss. There’s no power on earth will fend it just jarrin’ off.”

““When?”

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“That’s beyon’ my knowledge,” I said.

“So it is; so it is,” said McRimmon. “We’ve all oor leemitations. Ye’re certain it was a crack?”

“Man, it’s a crevasse,” I said, for there were no words to describe the magnitude of it. “An’ young Bannister’s sayin’ it’s no more than a superfeecial flaw!”

“Weel, I tak’ it oor business is to mind oor business. If ye’ve ony friends aboard her, McPhee, why not bid them to a bit dinner at Radley’s?”

“I was thinkin’ o’ tea in the cuddy,” I said. “Engineers o’ tramp freighters cannot afford hotel prices.”

“Na! na!” says the auld man, whimperin’. “Not the cuddy. They’ll laugh at my ‘Kite,’ for she’s no plastered with paint like the ‘Hoor.’ Bid them to Radley’s, McPhee, an’ send me the bill. Thank Dandie, here, man. I’m no used to thanks.” Then he turned him round. (I was just thinkin’ the vara same thing.)

“Mister McPhee,” said he, “this is not senile dementia.”

“Preserve ’s!” I said, clean jumped oot o’ mysel’.

“I was but thinkin’ you’re fey, McRimmon.”

“Dod, the auld deevil laughed till he nigh sat down on Dandie. “Send me the bill,” says he. “I’m lang past champagne, but tell me how it tastes the morn.”

“Bell and I bid young Bannister and Calder to dinner at Radley’s. They’ll have no laughin’ an’ singin’ there, but we took a private room—like yacht-owners fra’ Cowes.”

McPhee grinned all over, and lay back to think.

“And then?” said I.

“We were no drunk in ony preceese sense o’ the word, but Radley’s showed me the dead men. There were

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six magnums o’ dry champagne an’ maybe a bottle o’ whisky.’

‘Do you mean to tell me that you four got away with a magnum and a half apiece, besides whisky?’ I demanded.

McPhee looked down upon me from between his shoulders with toleration.

‘Man, we were not settin’ down to drink,’ he said. ‘They no more than made us wutty. To be sure, young Bannister laid his head on the table an’ greeted like a bairn, an’ Calder was all for callin’ on Steiner at two in the morn’ an’ painting him galley-green; but they’d been drinkin’ the afternoon. Lord, how they twa cursed the Board, an’ the “Grotkau,” an’ the tail-shaft, an’ the engines, an’ a’! They didna talk o’ superfecial flaws that night. I mind young Bannister an’ Calder shakin’ hands on a bond to be revenged on the Board at ony reasonable cost this side o’ losing their certificates. Now mark ye how false economy ruins business. The Board fed them like swine (I have good reason to know it), an’ I’ve obsairved wi’ my ain people that if ye touch his stomach ye wauken the deil in a Scot. Men will tak’ a dredger across the Atlantic if they’re well fed, and fetch her somewhere on the broadside o’ the Americas; but bad food’s bad service the world over.

‘The bill went to McRimmon, an’ he said no more to me till the week-end, when I was at him for more paint, for we’d heard the “Kite” was chartered Liverpool-side.

“‘Bide whaur ye’re put,” said the Blind Deevil. “Man, do ye wash in champagne? The ‘Kite’s’ no leavin’ here till I gie the order, an’—how am I to waste paint on her, wi’ the ‘Lammergeyer’ docked for who knows how long, an’ a’?”

‘She was our big freighter—McIntyre was engineer—

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an' I knew she'd come from overhaul not three months. That morn I met McRimmon's head-clerk—ye'll not know him—fair bitin' his nails off wi' mortification.

' "The auld man's gone gyte," says he. "He's withdrawn the 'Lammergeyer.'"

' "Maybe he has reasons," says I.

' "Reasons! He's daft!"

' "He'll no be daft till he begins to paint," I said.

' "That's just what he's done—and South American freights higher than we'll live to see them again. He's laid her up to paint her—to paint her—to paint her!" says the little clerk, dancin' like a hen on a hot plate. "Five thousand ton o' potential freight rottin' in dry-dock, man; an' he dolin' the paint out in quarter-pound-tins, for it cuts him to the heart, mad though he is. An' the 'Grotkau'—the 'Grotkau' of all conceivable bottoms—soaking up every pound that should be ours at Liverpool!"

' I was staggered wi' this folly—considerin' the dinner at Radley's in connection wi' the same.

' "Ye may well stare, McPhee," says the head-clerk. "There's engines, an' rollin' stock, an' iron bridges—d'ye know what freights are noo?—an' pianos, an' millinery, an' fancy Brazil cargo o' every species pourin' into the 'Grotkau'—the 'Grotkau' o' the Jerusalem firm—and the 'Lammergeyer's' bein' painted!"

' Losh, I thought he'd drop dead wi' the fits.

' I could say no more than "Obey orders, if ye break owners," but on the "Kite" we believed McRimmon was mad; an' McIntyre of the "Lammergeyer" was for lockin' him up by some patent legal process he'd found in a book o' maritime law. An' a' that week South American freights rose an' rose. It was sinfu'!

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‘Syne Bell got orders to tak’ the “Kite” round to Liverpool in water-ballast, and McRimmon came to bid’s good-bye, yammerin’ an’ whinin’ o’er the acres o’ paint he’d lavished on the “Lammergeyer.”

““I look to you to retrieve it,” says he. “I look to you to reimburse me! ’Fore God, why are ye not cast off? Are ye dawdlin’ in dock for a purpose?”

““What odds, McRimmon?” says Bell. “We’ll be a day behind the fair at Liverpool. The ‘Grotkau’s’ got all the freight that might ha’ been ours an’ the ‘Lammergeyer’s.’” McRimmon laughed an’ chuckled—the pairfect eemage o’ senile dementia. Ye ken his eyebrows wark up an’ down like a gorilla’s.

““Ye’re under sealed orders,” said he, tee-heein’ an’ scratchin’ himself. “Yon’s they”—tobe opened seriatim.

‘Says Bell, shufflin’ the envelopes when the auld man had gone ashore: “We’re to creep round a’ the south coast, standin’ in for orders—this weather, too. There’s no question o’ his lunacy now.”

‘Well, we buttocked the auld “Kite” along—vara bad weather we made—standin’ in alongside for telegraphic orders, which are the curse o’ skippers. Syne we made over to Holyhead, an’ Bell opened the last envelope for the last instructions. I was wi’ him in the cuddy, an’ he threw it over to me, cryin’: “Did ye ever know the like, Mac?”

‘I’ll no say what McRimmon had written, but he was far from mad. There was a sou’-wester brewin’ when we made the mouth o’ the Mersey, a bitter cold morn wi’ a gray-green sea and a gray-green sky—Liverpool weather, as they say; an’ there we lay choppin’, an’ the men swore. Ye canna keep secrets aboard ship. They thought McRimmon was mad, too.

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'Syne we saw the "Grotkau" rollin' oot on the top o' flood, deep an' double deep, wi' her new-painted funnel an' her new-painted boats an' a'. She looked her name, an', moreover, she coughed like it. Calder tauld me at Radley's what ailed his engines, but my own ear would ha' told me twa mile awa', by the beat o' them. Round we came, plungin' an' squatterin' in her wake, an' the wind cut wi' good promise o' more to come. By six it blew hard but clear, an' before the middle watch it was a sou'-wester in airnest.

' "She'll edge into Ireland, this gait," says Bell. I was with him on the bridge, watchin' the "Grotkau's" port light. Ye canna see green so far as red, or we'd ha' kept to leeward. We'd no passengers to consider, an' (all eyes being on the "Grotkau") we fair walked into a liner rampin' home to Liverpool. Or, to be preceese, Bell no more than twisted the "Kite" oot from under her bows, and there was a little damnin' betwix' the twa bridges. Noo a passenger'—McPhee regarded me benignantly—'wad ha' told the papers that as soon as he got to the Customs. We stuck to the "Grotkau's" tail that night an' the next twa days—she slowed down to five knots by my reckonin'—and we lapped along the weary way to the Fastnet.'

'But you don't go by the Fastnet to get to any South American port, do you?' I said.

'We do not. We prefer to go as direct as may be. But we were followin' the "Grotkau," an' she'd no walk into that gale for ony consideration. Knowin' what I did to her discredit, I couldna' blame young Bannister. It was warkin' up to a North Atlantic winter gale, snow an' sleet an' a perishin' wind. Eh, it was like the deil walkin' abroad o' the surface o' the deep, whuppin' off

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the top o’ the waves before he made up his mind. They’d bore up against it so far, but the minute she was clear o’ the Skelligs she fair tucked up her skirts an’ ran for it by Dunmore Head. Wow, she rolled!

“She’ll be makin’ Smerwick,” says Bell.

“She’d ha’ tried for Ventry by noo if she meant that,” I said.

“They’ll roll the funnel oot o’ her, this gait,” says Bell. “Why canna Bannister keep her head to sea?”

“It’s the tail-shaft. Ony rollin’s better than pitchin’ wi’ superfeecial cracks in the tail-shaft. Calder knows that much,” I said.

“It’s ill wark retreevin’ steamers this weather,” said Bell. His beard and whiskers were frozen to his oilskin, an’ the spray was white on the weather side of him. Pairfect North Atlantic winter weather!

‘One by one the sea raxed away our three boats, an’ the davits were crumpled like rams’ horns.

“Yon’s bad,” said Bell, at the last. “Ye canna pass a hawser wi’oot a boat.” Bell was a vara judeecious man—for an Aberdonian.

‘I’m not one that fashes himself for eventualities outside the engine-room, so I e’en slipped down betwixt waves to see how the “Kite” fared. Man, she’s the best-geared boat of her class that ever left the Clyde! Kinloch, my second, knew her as well as I did. I found him dryin’ his socks on the main-steam, an’ combin’ his whiskers wi’ the comb Janet gied me last year, for the world an’ a’ as though we were in port. I tried the feed, speered into the stoke-hole, thumbd all bearin’s, spat on the thrust for luck, gied ’em my blessin’, an’ took Kinloch’s socks before I went up to the bridge again.

‘Then Bell handed me the wheel, an’ went below to

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warm himself. When he came up my gloves were frozen to the spokes, an' the ice clicked over my eyelids. Pairfect North Atlantic winter weather, as I was sayin'.

'The gale blew out by night, but we lay in smotherin' cross-seas that made the auld "Kite" chatter from stem to stern. I slowed to thirty-four, I mind—no, thirty-seven. There was a long swell the morn, an' the "Grotkau" was headin' into it west awa'.

' "She'll win to Rio yet, tail-shaft or no tail-shaft," says Bell.

' "Last night shook her," I said. "She'll jar it off yet, mark my word."

'We were then, maybe, a hunder and fifty mile west-sou'-west o' Slyne Head, by dead reckonin'. Next day we made a hunder an' thirty—ye'll note we were not racin' boats—an' the day after a hunder and sixty-one, an' that made us, we'll say, Eighteen an' a bittock west, an' maybe Fifty-one an' a bittock north, crossin' all the North Atlantic liner lanes on the long slant, always in sight o' the "Grotkau," creepin' up by night and fallin' awa' by day. After the gale, it was cold weather wi' dark nights.

'I was in the engine-room on Friday night, just before the middle watch, when Bell whustled down the tube: "She's done it"; an' up I came.

'The "Grotkau" was just a fair distance south, an' one by one she ran up the three red lights in a vertical line—the sign of a steamer not under control.

' "Yon's a tow for us," said Bell, lickin' his chops. "She'll be worth more than the 'Breslau.' We'll go down to her, McPhee!"

' "Bide a while," I said. "The seas fair throng wi' ships here."

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“Reason why,” said Bell. “It’s a fortune gaun beggin’. What d’ye think, man?”

“Gie her till daylight. She knows we’re here. If Bannister needs help he’ll loose a rocket.”

“Wha told ye Bannister’s need? We’ll ha’ some rag-an’-bone tramp snappin’ her up under oor nose,” said he; an’ he put the wheel over. We were gaun slow.

“Bannister wad like better to go home on a liner an’ eat in the saloon. Mind ye what they said o’ Holdock and Steiner’s food that night at Radley’s? Keep her awa’, man—keep her awa’. A tow’s a tow, but a dere-lict’s big salvage.”

“E-eh!” said Bell. “Yon’s an inshot o’ yours, Mac. I love ye like a brother. We’ll bide whaur we are till daylight”; an’ he kept her awa’.

‘Syne up went a rocket forward, an’ twa on the bridge, an’ a blue light aft. Syne a tar-barrel forward again.

“She’s sinkin’,” said Bell. “It’s all gaun, an’ I’ll get no more than a pair o’ night-glasses for pickin’ up young Bannister—the fool!”

“Fair an’ soft again,” I said. “She’s signallin’ to the south of us. Bannister knows as well as I that one rocket would bring the ‘Kite.’ He’ll no be wastin’ fireworks for nothin’. Hear her ca’!”

‘The “Grotkau” whustled an’ whustled for five minutes, an’ then there were more fireworks—a regular exhibeetion.

“That’s no for men in the regular trade,” says Bell. “Ye’re right, Mac. That’s for a cuddy full o’ passengers.” He blinked through the night-glasses where it lay a bit thick to southward.

“What d’ye make of it?” I said.

“Liner,” he says. “Yon’s her rocket. Ou, ay;

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they've waukened the gold-strapped skipper, an'—noo they've waukened the passengers. They're turnin' on the electrics, cabin by cabin. Yon's anither rocket! They're comin' up to help the perishin' in deep watters."

"Gie me the glass," I said. But Bell danced on the bridge, clean dementit. "Mails—mails—mails!" said he. "Under contract wi' the Government for the due conveyance o' the mails; an' as such, Mac, ye'll note, she may rescue life at sea, but she canna tow!—she canna tow! Yon's her night-signal. She'll be up in half an hour!"

"Gowk!" I said, "an' we blazin' here wi' all oor lights. Oh, Bell, but ye're a fool."

'He tumbled off the bridge forward, an' I tumbled aft, an' before ye could wink our lights were oot, the engine-room hatch was covered, an' we lay pitch-dark, watchin' the lights o' the liner come up that the "Grotkau" 'd been signallin' for. Twenty knot an hour she came, every cabin lighted, an' her boats swung awa'. It was grandly done, an' in the inside of an hour. She stopped like Mrs. Holdock's machine; down went the gangway, down went the boats, an' in ten minutes we heard the passengers cheerin', an' awa' she fled.

"They'll tell o' this all the days they live," said Bell. "A rescue at sea by night, as pretty as a play. Young Bannister an' Calder will be drinkin' in the saloon, an' six months hence the Board o' Trade 'll gie the skipper a pair o' binoculars. It's vara philanthropic all round."

'We lay by till day—ye may think we waited for it wi' sore eyes—an' there sat the "Grotkau," her nose a bit cocked, just leerin' at us. She looked pairfectly rideeculous.

"She'll be fillin' aft," says Bell; "for why is she down

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by the stern? The tail-shaft’s punched a hole in her, an’—we’ve no boats. There’s three hunder thousand pound sterlin’, at a conservative estimate, droonin’ before our eyes. What’s to do?” An’ his bearin’s got hot again in a minute; for he was an incontinent man.

““Run her as near as ye daur,” I said. “Gie me a jacket an’ a life-line, an’ I’ll swum for it.” There was a bit lump of a sea, an’ it was cold in the wind—vara cold; but they’d gone overside like passengers, young Bannister an’ Calder an’ a’, leaving the gangway down on the lee-side. It would ha’ been a flyin’ in the face o’ manifest Providence to overlook the invitation. We were within fifty yards o’ her while Kinloch was garmin’ me all over wi’ oil behind the galley; an’ as we ran past I went overboard for the salvage o’ three hunder thousand pound. Man, it was perishin’ cold, but I’d done my job judgmatically, an’ came scrapin’ all along her side slap on to the lower gratin’ o’ the gangway. No one more astonished than me, I assure ye. Before I’d caught my breath I’d skinned both my knees on the gratin’, an’ was climbin’ up before she rolled again. I made my line fast to the rail, an’ squattered aft to young Bannister’s cabin, whaur I dried me wi’ everything in his bunk, an’ put on every conceivable sort o’ rig I found till the blood was circulatin’. Three pair drawers, I mind I found—to begin upon—an’ I needed them all. It was the coldest cold I remember in all my experience.

‘Syne I went aft to the engine-room. The “Grotkau” sat on her own tail, as they say. She was vara short-shafted, an’ her gear was all aft. There was four or five foot o’ water in the engine-room slummockin’ to and fro, black an’ greasy; maybe there was six foot. The stokehold doors were screwed home, an’ the stokehold was

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tight enough, but for a minute the mess in the engine-room deceived me. Only for a minute, though, an' that was because I was not, in a manner o' speakin', as calm as ordinar'. I looked again to mak' sure. 'Twas just black wi' bilge: dead watter that must ha' come in fortuitously, ye ken.'

'McPhee, I'm only a passenger,' I said, 'but you don't persuade me that six foot o' water can come into an engine-room fortuitously.'

'Who's tryin' to persuade one way or the other?' McPhee retorted. 'I'm statin' the facts o' the case—the simple, natural facts. Six or seven foot o' dead watter in the engine-room is a vara depressin' sight if ye think there's like to be more comin'; but I did not consider that such was likely, and so, ye'll note, I was not depressed.'

'That's all very well, but I want to know about the water,' I said.

'I've told ye. There was six feet or more there, wi' Calder's cap floatin' on top.'

'Where did it come from?'

'Weel, in the confusion o' things after the propeller had dropped off an' the engines were racin' an' a', it's vara possible that Calder might ha' lost it off his head an' no troubled himself to pick it up again. I remember seein' that cap on him at Southampton.'

'I don't want to know about the cap. I'm asking where the water came from, and what it was doing there, and why you were so certain that it wasn't a leak, McPhee?'

'For good reason—for good an' sufficient reason.'

'Give it to me, then.'

'Well, it's a reason that does not properly concern

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myself only. To be preceese, I’m of opinion that it was due, the watter, in part to an error o’ judgment in another man. We can a’ mak’ mistakes.’

‘Oh, I beg your pardon! Go on.’

‘I got me to the rail again, an’, “What’s wrang?” said Bell, hailin’.

“‘She’ll do,” I said. “Send’s o’er a hawser, an’ a man to help steer. I’ll pull him in by the life-line.”

‘I could see heads bobbin’ back an’ forth, an’ a whuff or two o’ strong words. Then Bell said: “They’ll not trust themselves—one of ’em—in this watter—except Kinloch, an’ I’ll no spare him.”

“‘The more salvage to me, then,” I said. “I’ll make shift solo.”

‘Says one dock-rat at this: “D’ye think she’s safe?”

“‘I’ll guarantee ye nothing,” I said, “except, maybe, a hammerin’ for keepin’ me this long.”

‘Then he sings out: “There’s no more than one life-belt, an’ they canna find it, or I’d come.”

“‘Throw him over, the Jezebel,” I said, for I was oot o’ patience; an’ they took haud o’ that volunteer before he knew what was in store, and hove him over in the bight of the life-line. So I e’en hauled him upon the sag of it, hand-over-fist—a vara welcome recruit when I’d tilted the salt watter out of him; for, by the way, he could not swum.

‘Syne they bent a twa-inch rope to the life-line, an’ a hawser to that, an’ I led the rope o’er the drum of a hand-winch forward, an’ we sweated the hawser inboard an’ made it fast to the “Grotkau’s” bitts.

‘Bell brought the “Kite” so close I feared she’d roll in an’ do the “Grotkau’s” plates a mischief. He hove anither life-line to me, an’ went astern, an’ we had all

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the weary winch-work to do again wi' a second hawser. For all that, Bell was right: we'd a long tow before us, an' though Providence had helped us that far, there was no sense in leavin' too much to its keepin'. When the second hawser was fast, I was wet wi' sweat, an' I cried Bell to tak' up his slack an' go home. The other man was by way o' helpin' the work wi' askin' for drinks, but I e'en told him he must hand reef an' steer, beginnin' with steerin', for I was goin to turn in. He steered—ou, ay, he steered, in a manner o' speakin'. At the least, he grippit the spokes an' twiddled 'em an' looked wise, but I doubt if the "Hoor" ever felt it. I turned in there an' then to young Bannister's bunk, an' slept past expression. I waukened ragin' wi' hunger, a fair lump o' sea runnin', the "Kite" snorin' awa' four knots an hour; an' the "Grotkau" slappin' her nose under, an' yawin' an' standin' over at discretion. She was a most disgracefu' tow. But the shameful thing of all was the food. I raxed me a meal fra galley-shelves an' pantries an' lazareetes an' cubby-holes that I would not ha' gied to the mate of a Cardiff collier; an' ye ken we say a Cardiff mate will eat clinkers to save waste. I'm sayin' it was simply vile! The crew had written what they thought of it on the new paint o' the fo'c'sle, but I had not a decent soul wi' me to complain on. There was nothin' for me to do save watch the hawsers an' the "Kite's" tail squatterin' down in white watter when she lifted to a sea; so I got steam on the after donkey-pump, an' pumped oot the engine-room. There's no sense in leavin' watter loose in a ship. When she was dry, I went down the shaft-tunnel, an' found she was leakin' a little through the stuffin'-box, but nothin' to make wark. The propeller had e'en jarred off, as I

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knew it must, an’ Calder had been waitin’ for it to go wi’ his hand on the gear. He told me as much when I met him ashore. There was nothin’ started or strained. It had just slipped awa’ to the bed o’ the Atlantic as easy as a man dyin’ wi’ due warnin’—a most providential business for all concerned. Syne I took stock o’ the “Grotkau’s” upper works. Her boats had been smashed on the davits, an’ here an’ there was the rail missin’, an’ a ventilator or two had fetched awa’, an’ the bridge-rails were bent by the seas; but her hatches were tight, and she’d taken no sort of harm. Dod, I came to hate her like a human bein’, for I was eight weary days aboard, starvin’—ay, starvin’—within a cable’s length o’ plenty. All day I lay in the bunk reading the “Woman-Hater,” the grandest book Charlie Reade ever wrote, an’ pickin’ a toothful here an’ there. It was weary, weary work. Eight days, man, I was aboard the “Grotkau,” an’ not one full meal did I make. Sma’ blame her crew would not stay by her. The other man? Oh, I warked him to keep him crack. I warked him wi’ a vengeance.

‘It came on to blow when we fetched soundin’s, an’ that kept me standin’ by the hawsers, lashed to the capstan, breathin’ betwixt green seas. I near died o’ cauld an’ hunger, for the “Grotkau” towed like a barge, an’ Bell howkit her along through or over. It was vara thick up-Channel, too. We were standin’ in to make some sort o’ light, and we near walked over twa three fishin’-boats, an’ they cried us we were o’erclose to Falmouth. Then we were near cut down by a drunken foreign fruiter that was blunderin’ between us an’ the shore, and it got thicker and thicker that night, an’ I could feel by the tow Bell did not know whaur he was. Losh, we knew in the morn, for the wind blew the fog

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oot like a candle, an' the sun came clear; and as surely as McRimmon gied me my cheque, the shadow o' the Eddystone lay across our tow-rope! We were that near—ay, we were that near! Bell fetched the "Kite" round with a jerk that came close to tearin' the bitts out o' the "Grotkau"; an' I mind I thanked my Maker in young Bannister's cabin when we were inside Plymouth.

'The first to come aboard was McRimmon, wi' Dandie. Did I tell you our orders were to take anything found into Plymouth? The auld deil had just come down overnight, puttin' two an' two together from what Calder had told him when the liner landed the "Grotkau's" men. He had preceesely hit oor time. I'd hailed Bell for something to eat, an' he sent it o'er in the same boat wi' McRimmon, when the auld man came to me. He grinned an' slapped his legs and worked his eyebrows the while I ate.

"How do Holdock, Steiner, and Chase feed their men?" said he.

"Ye can see," I said, knockin' the top off another beer-bottle. "I did not sign to be starved, McRimmon."

"Nor to swim, either," said he, for Bell had tauld him how I carried the line aboard. "Well, I'm thinkin' you'll be no loser. What freight could we ha' put into the 'Lammergeyer' would equal salvage on four hundred thousand pounds—hull and cargo? Eh, McPhee? This cuts the liver out o' Holdock, Steiner, Chase, and Company, Limited. Eh, McPhee? An' I'm sufferin' from senile dementia now? Eh, McPhee? An' I'm not daft, am I, till I begin to paint the 'Lammergeyer'? Eh, McPhee? Ye may weel lift your leg, Dandie! I ha' the laugh o' them all. Ye found watter in the engine-room?"

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"To speak wi'oot prejudice," I said, "there was some watter."

"They thought she was sinkin' after the propeller went. She filled with extraordinary rapeedity. Calder said it grieved him an' Bannister to abandon her."

"I thought o' the dinner at Radley's, an' what like o' food I'd eaten for eight days.

"It would grieve them sore," I said.

"But the crew would not hear o' stayin' an' takin' their chances. They're gaun up an' down sayin' they'd ha' starved first."

"They'd ha' starved if they'd stayed," said I.

"I tak' it, fra Calder's account, there was a mutiny a'most."

"Ye know more than I, McRimmon," I said. "Speakin' wi'oot prejudice, for we're all in the same boat, who opened the bilge-cock?"

"Oh, that's it—is it?" said the auld man, an' I could see he was surprised. "A bilge-cock, ye say?"

"I believe it was a bilge-cock. They were all shut when I came aboard, but some one had flooded the engine-room eight feet over all, and shut it off with the worm-an'-wheel gear from the second gratin' afterwards."

"Losh!" said McRimmon. "The inequlty o' man's beyond belief. But it's awfu' discreditable to Holdock, Steiner, and Chase, if that came oot in court."

"It's just my own curiosity," I said.

"Aweel, Dandie's afflicted wi' the same disease. Dandie, strive against curiosity, for it brings a little dog into traps an' suchlike. Whaur was the 'Kite' when yon painted liner took off the 'Grotkau's' people?"

"Just there or thereabouts," I said.

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“An’ which o’ you twa thought to cover your lights?” said he, winkin’.

“Dandie,” I said to the dog, “we must both strive against curiosity. It’s an unremunerative business. What’s our chance o’ salvage, Dandie?”

He laughed till he choked. “Tak’ what I gie you, McPhee, an’ be content,” he said. “Lord, how a man wastes time when he gets old. Get aboard the ‘Kite,’ mon, as soon as ye can. I’ve clean forgot there’s a Baltic charter yammerin’ for you at London. That’ll be your last voyage, I’m thinkin’, excep’ by way o’ pleasure.”

‘Steiner’s men were comin’ aboard to take charge an’ tow her round, an’ I passed young Steiner in a boat as I went to the “Kite.” He looked down his nose; but McRimmon pipes up: “Here’s the man ye owe the ‘Grotkau’ to—at a price, Steiner—at a price! Let me introduce Mister McPhee to you. Maybe ye’ve met before; but ye’ve vara little luck in keeping your men—ashore or afloat!”

‘Young Steiner looked angry enough to eat him as he chuckled an’ whustled in his dry old throat.

“Ye’ve not got your award yet,” Steiner says.

“Na, na,” says the auld man, in a screech ye could hear to the Hoe, “but I’ve twa million sterlin’, an’ no bairns, ye Judeeas Apella, if ye mean to fight; an’ I’ll match ye p’und for p’und till the last p’und’s oot. Ye ken me, Steiner? I’m McRimmon o’ McNaughton and McRimmon!”

“Dod!” he said betwix’ his teeth, sittin’ back in the boat, “I’ve waited fourteen year to break that Jew-firm, an’ God be thankit I’ll do it now.”

‘The “Kite” was in the Baltic while the auld man

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was warkin his warks, but I know the assessors valued the “Grotkau,” all told, at over three hunder and sixty thousand—her manifest was a treat o’ richness—and McRimmon got a third for salvin’ an abandoned ship. Ye see, there’s vast deeference between towin’ a ship wi’ men on her and pickin’ up a derelict—a vast deeference—in pounds sterlin’. Moreover, twa three o’ the “Grotkau’s” crew were burnin’ to testify about the food, an’ there was a note o’ Calder to the Board in regard to the tail-shaft that would ha’ been vara damagin’ if it had come into court. They knew better than to fight.

‘Syne the “Kite” came back, and McRimmon paid off me an’ Bell personally, and the rest of the crew pro rata. My share—oor share, I should say—was just twenty-five thousand pounds sterlin’.’

At this point Janet jumped up and kissed him.

‘Five-and-twenty thousand pound sterlin’. Noo, I’m fra the North, and I’m not the like to fling money awa’ rashly, but I’d gie six months’ pay—one hunder an’ twenty pound—to know who flooded the engine-room of the “Grotkau.” I’m fairly well acquaint wi’ McRimmon’s eediosyncrasies, and he’d no hand in it. It was not Calder, for I’ve asked him, an’ he wanted to fight me. It would be in the highest degree unprofessional o’ Calder—not fightin’, but openin’ bilge-cocks—but for a while I thought it was him. Ay, I judged it might be him—under temptation.’

‘What’s your theory?’ I demanded.

‘Weel, I’m inclined to think it was one o’ those singular providences that remind us we’re in the hands o’ Higher Powers.’

‘It couldn’t open and shut itself?’

‘I did not mean that; but some half-starvin’ oiler or,

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maybe, trimmer must ha' opened it awhile to mak' sure o' leavin' the "Grotkau." It's a demoralisin' thing to see an engine-room flood up after any accident to the gear—demoralisin' and deceptive both. Aweel, the man got what he wanted, for they went aboard the liner cryin' that the "Grotkau" was sinkin'. But it's curious to think o' the consequences. In a' human probability, he's bein' damned in heaps at the present moment aboard another tramp-freighter; an' here am I, wi' five-an'-twenty thousand pounds invested, resolute to go to sea no more—providential's the preceese word—except as a passenger, ye'll understand, Janet.'

McPhee kept his word. He and Janet went for a voyage as passengers in the first-class saloon. They paid seventy pounds for their berths; and Janet found a very sick woman in the second-class saloon, so that for sixteen days she lived below, and chattered with the stewardesses at the foot of the second-saloon stairs while her patient slept. McPhee was a passenger for exactly twenty-four hours. Then the engineers' mess—where the oil-cloth tables are—joyfully took him to its bosom, and for the rest of the voyage that company was richer by the unpaid services of a highly certificated engineer.

AN ERROR IN THE FOURTH DIMENSION

(1894)

BEFORE he was thirty he discovered that there was no one to play with him. Though the wealth of three toilsome generations stood to his account, though his tastes in the matter of books, bindings, rugs, swords, bronzes, lacquer, pictures, plate, statuary, horses, conservatories, and agriculture were educated and catholic, the public opinion of his country wanted to know why he did not go to office daily, as his father had before him.

So he fled, and they howled behind him that he was an unpatriotic Anglomaniac, born to consume fruits, one totally lacking in public spirit. He wore an eye-glass; he had built a wall round his country house, with a high gate that shut, instead of inviting America to sit on his flower-beds; he ordered his clothes from England; and the press of his abiding city cursed him, from his eye-glass to his trousers, for two consecutive days.

When he rose to light again, it was where nothing less than the tents of an invading army in Piccadilly would make any difference to anybody. If he had money and leisure, England stood ready to give him all that money and leisure could buy. That price paid, she would ask no questions. He took his cheque-book and accumulated things—warily at first, for he remembered that

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in America things own the man. To his delight, he discovered that in England he could put his belongings under his feet; for classes, ranks, and denominations of people rose, as it were, from the earth, and silently and discreetly took charge of his possessions. They had been born and bred for that sole purpose—servants of the cheque-book. When that was at an end they would depart as mysteriously as they had come.

The impenetrability of this regulated life irritated him, and he strove to learn something of the human side of these people. He retired baffled, to be trained by his menials. In America, the native demoralises the English servant. In England, the servant educates the master. Wilton Sargent strove to learn all they taught as ardently as his father had striven to wreck, before capture, the railways of his native land; and it must have been some touch of the old bandit railway blood that bade him buy, for a song, Holt Hangars, whose forty-acre lawn, as every one knows, sweeps down in velvet to the quadruple tracks of the Great Buchonian Railway. Their trains flew by almost continuously, with a bee-like drone in the day and a flutter of strong wings at night. The son of Merton Sargent had good right to be interested in them. He owned controlling interests in several thousand miles of track—not permanent-way—built on altogether different plans, where locomotives eternally whistled for grade-crossings, and parlour-cars of fabulous expense and unrestful design skated round curves that the Great Buchonian would have condemned as unsafe in a construction-line. From the edge of his lawn he could trace the chaired metals falling away, rigid as a bowstring, into the valley of the Prest, studded with the long perspective of the block-

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signals, buttressed with stone, and carried, high above all possible risk, on a forty-foot embankment.

Left to himself, he would have builded a private car, and kept it at the nearest railway station, Amberley Royal, five miles away. But those into whose hands he had committed himself for his English training had little knowledge of railways and less of private cars. The one they knew as something that existed in the scheme of things for their convenience. The other they held to be 'distinctly American'; and, with the versatility of his race, Wilton Sargent had set out to be just a little more English than the English.

He succeeded to admiration. He learned not to re-decorate Holt Hangars, though he warmed it; to leave his guests alone; to refrain from superfluous introductions; to abandon manners, of which he had great store, and to hold fast by manner which can after labour be acquired. He learned to let other people, hired for the purpose, attend to the duties for which they were paid. He learned—this he got from a ditcher on the estate—that every man with whom he came in contact had his decreed position in the fabric of the realm, which position Wilton would do well to consult. Last mystery of all, he learned to golf—well; and when an American knows the innermost meaning of 'Don't press, slow back, and keep your eye on the ball,' he is, for practical purposes, denationalised.

His other education proceeded on the pleasantest lines. Was he interested in any conceivable thing in heaven above, or the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth? Forthwith appeared at his table, guided by those safe hands into which he had fallen, the very men who had best said, done, written, explored, excavated, built,

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launched, created, or studied that one thing—herders of books and prints in the British Museum; specialists in scarabs, cartouches, and dynasties Egyptian; rovers and raiders from the heart of unknown lands; toxicologists; orchid-hunters; monographers on flint implements, carpets, prehistoric man, or early Renaissance music. They came, and they played with him. They asked no questions; they cared not so much as a pin who or what he was. They demanded only that he should be able to talk and listen courteously. Their work was done elsewhere and out of his sight.

There were also women.

‘Never,’ said Wilton Sargent to himself, ‘has an American seen England as I’m seeing it’; and he thought, blushing beneath the bedclothes, of the unregenerate and blatant days when he would steam to office, down the Hudson, in his twelve-hundred-ton ocean-going steam-yacht, and arrive by gradations, at Bleecker Street, hanging on to a leather strap between an Irish washerwoman and a German anarchist. If any of his guests had seen him then they would have said, ‘How distinctly American!’ and—Wilton did not care for that tone. He had schooled himself to an English walk, and so long as he did not raise it, an English voice. He did not gesticulate with his hands; he sat down on most of his enthusiasms, but he could not rid himself of *The Shibboleth*. He would ask for the Worcestershire sauce. Even Howard, his immaculate butler, could not break him of this.

It was decreed that he should complete his education in a wild and wonderful manner, and that I should be in at that death.

Wilton had more than once asked me to Holt Hangars,

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for the purpose of showing how well the new life fitted him; and each time I had declared it creaseless. His third invitation was more informal than the others, and he hinted of some matter in which he was anxious for my sympathy or counsel, or both. There is room for an infinity of mistakes when a man begins to take liberties with his nationality; and I went down expecting things. A seven-foot dog-cart and a groom in the black Holt Hangars livery met me at Amberley Royal. At Holt Hangars I was received by a person of elegance and true reserve, and piloted to my luxurious chamber. There were no other guests in the house, and this set me thinking.

Wilton came into my room about half-an-hour before dinner, and though his face was masked with a drop-curtain of highly embroidered indifference, I could see that he was not at ease. In time, for he was then almost as difficult to move as one of my own countrymen, I extracted the tale—simple in its extravagance, extravagant in its simplicity. It seemed that Hackman of the British Museum had been staying with him about ten days before, boasting of scarabs. Hackman has a way of carrying really priceless antiquities on his tie-ring and in his trouser pockets. Apparently, he had intercepted something on its way to the Boulak Museum which, he said, was ‘a genuine Amen-Hotep—a queen’s scarab of the Fourth Dynasty.’ Now Wilton had bought from Cassavetti, whose reputation is not above suspicion, a scarab of much the same scarabeousness, and had left it in his London chambers. Hackman at a venture, but knowing Cassavetti, pronounced it an imposition. There was long discussion—savant versus millionaire, one saying: ‘But I know it cannot be’; and

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the other: 'But I can and will prove it.' Wilton found it necessary for his soul's satisfaction to go up to town, then and there—a forty-mile run—and bring back the scarab before dinner. It was at this point that he began to cut corners with disastrous results. Amberley Royal station being five miles away, and the putting in of horses a matter of time, Wilton had told Howard, the immaculate butler, to signal the next train to stop; and Howard, who was more of a man of resource than his master gave him credit for, had, with the red flag of the ninth hole of the links which crossed the bottom of the lawn, signalled vehemently to the first up-train, and it had stopped. Here Wilton's account became confused. He attempted, it seems, to get into that highly indignant express, and a guard restrained him with more or less force—hailed him, in fact, backwards from the window of a locked carriage. Wilton must have struck the gravel with some vehemence, for the consequences, he admitted, were a free fight on the line, in which he lost his hat, and was at last dragged into the guard's van and set down breathless.

He had pressed money upon the man, and very foolishly had explained everything but his name. This he clung to, for he had a vision of tall head-lines in the New York papers, and well knew no son of Merton Sargent could expect mercy that side the water. The guard, to Wilton's amazement, refused the money on the grounds that this was a matter for the Company to attend to. Wilton insisted on his incognito, and, therefore, found two policemen waiting for him at St. Botolph terminus. When he expressed a wish to buy a new hat and telegraph to his friends, both policemen with one voice warned him that whatever he said would be used

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as evidence against him; and this had impressed Wilton tremendously.

‘They were so infernally polite,’ he said. ‘If they had clubbed me I wouldn’t have cared; but it was, “Step this way, sir,” and, “Up those stairs, please, sir,” till they jailed me—jailed me like a common drunk, and I had to stay in a filthy little cubby-hole of a cell all night.’

‘That comes of not giving your name and not wiring your lawyer,’ I replied. ‘What did you get?’

‘Forty shillings or a month,’ said Wilton, promptly, —‘next morning bright and early. They were working us off, three a minute. A girl in a pink hat—she was brought in at three in the morning—got ten days. I suppose I was lucky. I must have knocked his senses out of the guard. He told the old duck on the bench that I had told him I was a sergeant in the army, and that I was gathering beetles on the track. That comes of trying to explain to an Englishman.’

‘And you?’

‘Oh, I said nothing. I wanted to get out. I paid my fine, and bought a new hat, and came up here before noon next morning. There were a lot of people in the house, and I told ’em I’d been unavoidably detained, and then they began to recollect engagements elsewhere. Hackman must have seen the fight on the track and made a story of it. I suppose they thought it was distinctly American—confound ’em! It’s the only time in my life that I’ve ever flagged a train, and I wouldn’t have done it but for that scarab. ’Twouldn’t hurt their old trains to be held up once in a while.’

‘Well, it’s all over now,’ I said, choking a little. ‘And your name didn’t get into the papers. It is rather transatlantic when you come to think of it.’

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‘Over!’ Wilton grunted savagely. ‘It’s only just begun. That trouble with the guard was just common, ordinary assault—merely a little criminal business. The flagging of the train is civil, and means something quite different. They’re after me for that now.’

‘Who?’

‘The Great Buchonian. There was a man in court watching the case on behalf of the Company. I gave him my name in a quiet corner before I bought my hat, and—come to dinner now; I’ll show you the results afterwards.’

The telling of his wrongs had worked Wilton Sargent into a very fine temper, and I do not think that my conversation soothed him. In the course of the dinner, prompted by a devil of pure mischief, I dwelt with loving insistence on certain smells and sounds of New York which go straight to the heart of the native in foreign parts; and Wilton began to ask many questions about his associates aforetime—men of the New York Yacht Club, Storm King, or the Restigouche, owners of rivers, ranches, and shipping in their playtime, lords of railways, kerosene, wheat, and cattle in their offices. When the green mint came, I gave him a peculiarly oily and atrocious cigar, of the brand they sell in the tessellated, electric-lighted, with expensive-pictures-of-the-nude-adorned bar of the Pandemonium, and Wilton chewed the end for several minutes ere he lit it. The butler left us alone, and the chimney of the oak-panelled dining-room began to smoke.

‘That’s another!’ said he, poking the fire savagely, and I knew what he meant. One cannot put steam-heat in houses where Queen Elizabeth slept. The steady beat of a night-mail, whirling down the valley,

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recalled me to business. 'What about the Great Buchonian?' I said.

'Come into my study. That's all—as yet.'

It was a pile of Seidlitz-powders-coloured correspondence, perhaps nine inches high, and it looked very business-like.

'You can go through it,' said Wilton. 'Now I could take a chair and a red flag and go into Hyde Park and say the most atrocious things about your Queen, and preach anarchy and all that, y' know, till I was hoarse, and no one would take any notice. The Police—damn 'em!—would protect me if I got into trouble. But for a little thing like flagging a dirty little sawed-off train,—running through my own grounds, too,—I get the whole British Constitution down on me as if I sold bombs. I don't understand it.'

'No more does the Great Buchonian—apparently.' I was turning over the letters. 'Here's the traffic superintendent writing that it's utterly incomprehensible that any man should . . . Good Heavens, Wilton, you have done it!' I giggled, as I read on.

'What's funny now?' said my host.

'It seems that you, or Howard for you, stopped the three-forty Northern up.'

'I ought to know that! They all had their knife into me, from the engine-driver up.'

'But it's the three-forty—the "Induna." Surely you've heard of the Great Buchonian's "Induna"?'

'How the deuce am I to know one train from another? They come along about every two minutes.'

'Quite so. But this happens to be the "Induna," the one train of the whole line. She's timed for fifty-

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seven miles an hour. She was put on early in the Sixties, and she has never been stopped—'

'I know! Since William the Conqueror came over, or King Charles hid in her smoke-stack. You're as bad as the rest of these Britishers. If she's been run all that while, it's time she was flagged once or twice.'

The American was beginning to ooze out all over Wilton, and his small-boned hands were moving restlessly.

'Suppose you flagged the Empire State Express, or the Western Cyclone?'

'Suppose I did. I know Otis Harvey—or used to. I'd send him a wire, and he'd understand it was a ground-hog case with me. That's exactly what I told this British fossil company here.'

'Have you been answering their letters without legal advice, then?'

'Of course I have.'

'Oh, my sainted Country! Go ahead, Wilton.'

'I wrote 'em that I'd be very happy to see their president and explain to him in three words all about it; but that wouldn't do. 'Seems their president must be a god. He was too busy, and—well, you can read for yourself—they wanted explanations. The station-master at Amberley Royal—and he grovels before me, as a rule—wanted an explanation, and quick, too. The head sachem at St. Botolph's wanted three or four, and the Lord High Mukkamuk that oils the locomotives wanted one every fine day. I told 'em—I've told 'em about fifty times—I stopped their holy and sacred train because I wanted to board her. Did they think I wanted to feel her pulse?'

'You didn't say that?'

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‘“Feel her pulse”? Of course not.’

‘No. “Board her.”’

‘What else could I say?’

‘My dear Wilton, what is the use of Mrs. Sherborne, and the Clays, and all that lot working over you for four years to make an Englishman out of you, if the very first time you’re rattled you go back to the vernacular?’

‘I’m through with Mrs. Sherborne and the rest of the crowd. America’s good enough for me. What ought I to have said? “Please,” or “thanks awf’ly,” or how?’

There was no chance now of mistaking the man’s nationality. Speech, gesture, and step, so carefully drilled into him, had gone away with the borrowed mask of indifference. It was a lawful son of the Youngest People, whose predecessors were the Red Indian. His voice had risen to the high, throaty crow of his breed when they labour under excitement. His close-set eyes showed by turns unnecessary fear, annoyance beyond reason, rapid and purposeless flights of thought, the child’s lust for immediate revenge, and the child’s pathetic bewilderment, who knocks his head against the bad, wicked table. And on the other side, I knew, stood the Company, as unable as Wilton to understand.

‘And I could buy their old road three times over,’ he muttered, playing with a paper-knife, and moving restlessly to and fro.

‘You didn’t tell ’em that, I hope!’

There was no answer; but as I went through the letters, I felt that Wilton must have told them many surprising things. The Great Buchonian had first asked for an explanation of the stoppage of their Induna, and had found a certain levity in the explanation tendered. It then advised ‘Mr. W. Sargent’ to refer his

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solicitor to their solicitor, or whatever the legal phrase is.

‘And you didn’t?’ I said, looking up.

‘No. They were treating me exactly as if I had been a kid playing on the cable-tracks. There was not the least necessity for any solicitor. Five minutes’ quiet talk would have settled everything.’

I returned to the correspondence. The Great Buchonian regretted that owing to pressure of business none of their directors could accept Mr. W. Sargent’s invitation to run down and discuss the difficulty. The Great Buchonian was careful to point out that no animus underlay their action, nor was money their object. Their duty was to protect the interests of their line, and these interests could not be protected if a precedent were established whereby any of the Queen’s subjects could stop a train in mid-career. Again (this was another branch of the correspondence, not more than five heads of departments being concerned), the Company admitted that there was some reasonable doubt as to the duties of express-trains in all crises, and the matter was open to settlement by process of law till an authoritative ruling was obtained—from the House of Lords, if necessary.

‘That broke me all up,’ said Wilton, who was reading over my shoulder. ‘I knew I’d struck the British Constitution at last. The House of Lords—my Lord! And, anyway, I’m not one of the Queen’s subjects.’

‘Why, I had a notion that you’d got yourself naturalised.’

Wilton blushed hotly as he explained that very many things must happen to the British Constitution ere he took out his papers.

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‘How does it all strike you?’ he said. ‘Isn’t the Great Buchonian crazy?’

‘I don’t know. You’ve done something that no one ever thought of doing before, and the Company don’t know what to make of it. I see they offer to send down their solicitor and another official of the Company to talk things over informally. Then here’s another letter suggesting that you put up a fourteen-foot wall, crowned with bottle-glass, at the bottom of the garden.’

‘Talk of British insolence! The man who recommends that (he’s another bloated functionary) says that I shall “derive great pleasure from watching the wall going up day by day”! Did you ever dream of such gall? I’ve offered ’em money enough to buy a new set of cars and pension the driver for three generations; but that doesn’t seem to be what they want. They expect me to go to the House of Lords and get a ruling, and build walls between times. Are they all stark, raving mad? One ’ud think I made a profession of flagging trains. How in Tophet was I to know their old Induna from a way-train? I took the first that came along, and I’ve been jailed and fined for that once already.’

‘That was for slugging the guard.’

‘He had no right to haul me out when I was half-way through a window.’

‘What are you going to do about it?’

‘Their lawyer and the other official (can’t they trust their men unless they send ’em in pairs?) are coming here to-night. I told ’em I was busy, as a rule, till after dinner, but they might send along the entire directorate if it eased ’em any.’

Now, after-dinner visiting, for business or pleasure,

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is the custom of the smaller American town, and not that of England, where the end of the day is sacred to the owner. Verily, Wilton Sargent had hoisted the striped flag of rebellion!

'Isn't it time that the humour of the situation began to strike you, Wilton?' I asked.

'Where's the humour of baiting an American citizen just because he happens to be a millionaire—poor devil!' He was silent for a little time, and then went on: 'Of course. Now I see!' He spun round and faced me excitedly. 'It's as plain as mud. These ducks are laying their pipes to skin me.'

'They say explicitly they don't want money!'

'That's all a blind. So's their addressing me as W. Sargent. They know well enough who I am. They know I'm the old man's son. Why didn't I think of that before?'

'One minute, Wilton. If you climbed to the top of the dome of St. Paul's, and offered a reward to any Englishman who could tell you who or what Merton Sargent had been, there wouldn't be twenty men in all London to claim it.'

'That's their insular provincialism, then. I don't care a cent. The old man would have wrecked the Great Buchonian before breakfast for a pipe-opener. My God, I'll do it in dead earnest! I'll show 'em that they can't bulldose a foreigner for flagging one of their little tin-pot trains, and—I've spent fifty thousand a year here, at least, for the last four years.'

I was glad I was not his lawyer. I re-read the correspondence, notably the letter which recommended him—almost tenderly, I fancied—to build a fourteen-foot brick wall at the end of his garden, and half-way through it a thought struck me which filled me with pure joy.

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The footman ushered in two men, frock-coated, gray-trousered, smooth-shaven, heavy of speech and gait. It was nearly nine o'clock, but they looked as newly come from a bath. I could not understand why the elder and taller of the pair glanced at me as though we had an understanding, nor why he shook hands with an un-English warmth.

'This simplifies the situation,' he said in an undertone, and, as I stared, he whispered to his companion: 'I fear I shall be of very little service at present. Perhaps Mr. Folsom had better talk over the affair with Mr. Sargent.'

'That is what I am here for,' said Wilton.

The man of law smiled pleasantly, and said that he saw no reason why the difficulty should not be arranged in two minutes' quiet talk. His air, as he sat down opposite Wilton, was soothing to the last degree. His companion drew me up-stage. The mystery was deepening, but I followed meekly, and heard Wilton say, with an uneasy laugh:

'I've had insomnia over this affair, Mr. Folsom. Let's settle it one way or the other, for heaven's sake!'

'Ah! Has he suffered much from this lately?' said my man, with a preliminary cough.

'I really can't say,' I replied.

'Then I suppose you have only taken charge here?'

'I came this evening. I am not exactly in charge of anything.'

'I see. Merely to observe the course of events—in case—' He nodded.

'Exactly.' Observation, after all, is my trade.

He coughed again slightly, and then came to business.

'Now,—I am asking solely for information's sake,—do you find the delusions persistent?'

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‘Which delusions?’

‘They are variable, then. That is distinctly curious, because—but do I understand that the type of the delusion varies? For example, Mr. Sargent believes that he can buy the Great Buchonian.’

‘Did he write you that?’

‘He made the offer to the Company—on a half-sheet of notepaper. Now, has he by chance gone to the other extreme, and believed that he is in danger of becoming a pauper? The curious economy in the use of a half-sheet of paper shows that some idea of that kind might have flashed through his mind; and the two delusions can coexist, but it is not common. As you must know, the delusion of vast wealth—the folly of grandeurs, I believe our friends the French call it—is, as a rule, persistent, to the exclusion of all others.’

Then I heard Wilton’s best English voice at the end of the study:

‘My dear sir, I have explained twenty times already, I wanted to get that scarab in time for dinner. Suppose you had left an important legal document in the same way?’

‘That touch of cunning is very significant,’ my fellow-practitioner—since he insisted on it—muttered.

‘I am very happy, of course, to meet you; but if you had only sent your president down to dinner here, I could have settled the thing in half a minute. Why, I could have bought the Buchonian from him while your clerks were sending me this.’ Wilton dropped his hand heavily on the blue and white correspondence, and the lawyer started.

‘But, speaking frankly,’ the lawyer replied, ‘it is, if I may say so, perfectly inconceivable, even in the case of the most important legal documents, that any one

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should stop the three-forty express—the Induna—our Induna, my dear sir.’

‘Absolutely!’ my companion echoed; then to me in a lower tone: ‘You notice, again, the persistent delusion of wealth. I was called in when he wrote us that. You can see it is utterly impossible for the Company to continue to run their trains through the property of a man who may at any moment fancy himself divinely commissioned to stop all traffic. If he had only referred us to his lawyer—but, naturally, that he would not do under the circumstances. A pity—a great pity. He is so young. By the way, it is curious, is it not, to note the absolute conviction in the voice of those who are similarly afflicted,—heart-rending, I might say,—and the inability to follow a chain of connected thought.’

‘I can’t see what you want,’ Wilton was saying to the lawyer.

‘It need not be more than fourteen feet high—a really desirable structure, and it would be possible to grow pear-trees on the sunny side.’ The lawyer was speaking in an unprofessional voice. ‘There are few things pleasanter than to watch, so to say, one’s own vine and fig-tree in full bearing. Consider the profit and amusement you would derive from it. If you could see your way to doing this, we could arrange all the details with your lawyer, and it is possible that the Company might bear some of the cost. I have put the matter, I trust, in a nutshell. If you, my dear sir, will interest yourself in building that wall, and will kindly give us the name of your lawyers, I dare assure you that you will hear no more from the Great Buchonian.’

‘But why am I to disfigure my lawn with a new brick wall?’

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‘Gray flint is extremely picturesque.’

‘Gray flint, then, if you put it that way. Why the dickens must I go building towers of Babylon just because I have held up one of your trains—once?’

‘The expression he used in his third letter was that he wished to “board her,”’ said my companion in my ear. ‘That was very curious—a marine delusion impinging, as it were, upon a land one. What a marvellous world he must move in—and will before the curtain falls. So young, too—so very young!’

‘Well, if you want the plain English of it, I’m damned if I go wall-building to your order. You can fight it all along the line, into the House of Lords and out again, and get your rulings by the running foot if you like,’ said Wilton, hotly. ‘Great heavens, man, I only did it once!’

‘We have at present no guarantee that you may not do it again; and, with our traffic, we must, in justice to our passengers, demand some form of guarantee. It must not serve as a precedent. All this might have been saved if you had only referred us to your legal representative.’ The lawyer looked appealingly around the room. The deadlock was complete.

‘Wilton,’ I asked, ‘may I try my hand now?’

‘Anything you like,’ said Wilton. ‘It seems I can’t talk English. I won’t build any wall, though.’ He threw himself back in his chair.

‘Gentlemen,’ I said deliberately, for I perceived that the doctor’s mind would turn slowly, ‘Mr. Sargent has very large interests in the chief railway systems of his own country.’

‘His own country?’ said the lawyer.

‘At that age?’ said the doctor.

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‘Certainly. He inherited them from his father, Mr. Sargent, who is an American.’

‘And proud of it,’ said Wilton, as though he had been a Western Senator let loose on the Continent for the first time.

‘My dear sir,’ said the lawyer, half rising, ‘why did you not acquaint the Company with this fact—this vital fact—early in our correspondence? We should have understood. We should have made allowances.’

‘Allowances be damned! Am I a Red Indian or a lunatic?’

The two men looked guilty.

‘If Mr. Sargent’s friend had told us as much in the beginning,’ said the doctor, very severely, ‘much might have been saved.’ Alas! I had made a life’s enemy of that doctor.

‘I hadn’t a chance,’ I replied. ‘Now, of course, you can see that a man who owns several thousand miles of line, as Mr. Sargent does, would be apt to treat railways a shade more casually than other people.’

‘Of course; of course. He is an American; that accounts. Still, it was the Induna; but I can quite understand that the customs of our cousins across the water differ in these particulars from ours. And do you always stop trains in this way in the States, Mr. Sargent?’

‘I should if occasion ever arose; but I’ve never had to yet. Are you going to make an international complication of the business?’

‘You need give yourself no further concern whatever in the matter. We see that there is no likelihood of this action of yours establishing a precedent, which was the only thing we were afraid of. Now that you under-

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stand that we cannot reconcile our system to any sudden stoppages, we feel quite sure that—'

'I shan't be staying long enough to flag another train,' Wilton said pensively.

'You are returning, then, to our fellow-kinsmen across the—ah—big pond, you call it?'

'No, sir. The ocean—the North Atlantic Ocean. It's three thousand miles broad, and three miles deep in places. I wish it were ten thousand.'

'I am not so fond of sea-travel myself; but I think it is every Englishman's duty once in his life to study the great branch of our Anglo-Saxon race across the ocean,' said the lawyer.

'If ever you come over, and care to flag any train on my system, I'll—I'll see you through,' said Wilton.

'Thank you—ah, thank you. You're very kind. I'm sure I should enjoy myself immensely.'

'We have overlooked the fact,' the doctor whispered to me, 'that your friend proposed to buy the Great Buchonian.'

'He is worth anything from twenty to thirty million dollars—four to five million pounds,' I answered, knowing that it would be hopeless to explain.

'Really! That is enormous wealth, but the Great Buchonian is not in the market.'

'Perhaps he does not want to buy it now.'

'It would be impossible under any circumstances,' said the doctor.

'How characteristic!' murmured the lawyer, reviewing matters in his mind. 'I always understood from books that your countrymen were in a hurry. And so you would have gone forty miles to town and back—before dinner—to get a scarab? How intensely Ameri-

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can! But you talk exactly like an Englishman, Mr. Sargent.'

'That is a fault that can be remedied. There's only one question I'd like to ask you. You said it was inconceivable that any man should stop a train on your system?'

'And so it is—absolutely inconceivable.'

'Any sane man, that is?'

'That is what I meant, of course. I mean, with excep—'

'Thank you.'

The two men departed. Wilton checked himself as he was about to fill a pipe, took one of my cigars instead, and was silent for fifteen minutes.

Then said he: 'Have you got a list of the Southampton sailings on you?'

.
Far away from the graystone wings, the dark cedars, the faultless gravel drives, and the mint-sauce lawns of Holt Hangars runs a river called the Hudson, whose unkempt banks are covered with the palaces of those wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice. Here, where the hoot of the Haverstraw brick-barge-tug answers the howl of the locomotive on either shore, you shall find, with a complete installation of electric-light, nickel-plated binnacles, and a calliope attachment to her steam-whistle, the twelve-hundred-ton ocean-going steam-yacht 'Columbia,' lying at her private pier, to take to his office at an average speed of seventeen knots,—and the barges can look out for themselves,—Wilton Sargent, American.

MY SUNDAY AT HOME

(1895)

If the Red Slayer thinks he slays,
Or if the slain thinks he is slain,
They know not well the subtle way
I keep and pass and turn again.

Emerson.

IT was the unreproducible slid 'r,' as he said this was his 'fy-ist' visit to England, that told me he was a New Yorker from New York; and when, in the course of our long, lazy journey westward from Waterloo, he enlarged upon the beauties of his city, I, professing ignorance, said no word. He had, amazed and delighted at the man's civility, given the London porter a shilling for carrying his bag nearly fifty yards; he had thoroughly investigated the first-class lavatory compartment, which the London and South-Western sometimes supply without extra charge; and now, half awed, half contemptuous, but wholly interested, he looked out upon the ordered English landscape wrapped in its Sunday peace, while I watched the wonder grow upon his face. Why were the cars so short and stilted? Why had every other freight car a tarpaulin drawn over it? What wages would an engineer get now? Where was the swarming population of England he had read so

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much about? What was the rank of all those men on tricycles along the roads? When were we due at Plymouth?

I told him all I knew, and very much that I did not. He was going to Plymouth to assist in a consultation upon a fellow-countryman who had retired to a place called The Hoe—was that up town or down town?—to recover from nervous dyspepsia. Yes, he himself was a doctor by profession, and how any one in England could retain any nervous disorder passed his comprehension. Never had he dreamed of an atmosphere so soothing. Even the deep rumble of London traffic was monastical by comparison with some cities he could name; and the country—why, it was Paradise. A continuance of it, he confessed, would drive him mad; but for a few months it was the most sumptuous rest cure in his knowledge.

‘I’ll come over every year after this,’ he said, in a burst of delight, as we ran between two ten-foot hedges of pink and white may. ‘It’s seeing all the things I’ve ever read about. Of course it doesn’t strike you that way. I presume you belong here? What a finished land it is! It’s arrived. Must have been born this way. Now, where I used to live—Hello! What’s up?’

The train stopped in a blaze of sunshine at Framlyng-hame Admiral, which is made up entirely of the name-board, two platforms, and an overhead bridge, without even the usual siding. I had never known the slowest of locals stop here before; but on Sunday all things are possible to the London and South-Western. One could hear the drone of conversation along the carriages, and, scarcely less loud, the drone of the bumble-bees in the wallflowers up the bank. My companion thrust his head through the window and sniffed luxuriously.

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'Where are we now?' said he.

'In Wiltshire,' said I.

'Ah! A man ought to be able to write novels with his left hand in a country like this. Well, well! And so this is about Tess's country, ain't it? I feel just as if I were in a book. Say, the conduc—the guard has something on his mind. What's he getting at?'

The splendid badged and belted guard was striding up the platform at the regulation official pace, and in the regulation official voice was saying at each door—

'Has any gentleman here a bottle of medicine? A gentleman has taken a bottle of poison (laudanum) by mistake.'

Between each five paces he looked at an official telegram in his hand, refreshed his memory, and said his say. The dreamy look on my companion's face—he had gone far away with Tess—passed with the speed of a snap-shutter. After the manner of his countrymen, he had risen to the situation, jerked his bag down from the overhead rail, opened it, and I heard the click of bottles. 'Find out where the man is,' he said briefly. 'I've got something here that will fix him—if he can swallow still.'

Swiftly I fled up the line of carriages in the wake of the guard. There was clamour in a rear compartment—the voice of one bellowing to be let out, and the feet of one who kicked. With the tail of my eye I saw the New York doctor hastening thither, bearing in his hand a blue and brimming glass from the lavatory compartment. The guard I found scratching his head unofficially, by the engine, and murmuring: 'Well, I put a bottle of medicine off at Andover, I'm sure I did.'

'Better say it again, any'ow,' said the driver. 'Orders is orders. Say it again.'

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Once more the guard paced back, I, anxious to attract his attention, trotting at his heels.

'In a minute—in a minute, sir,' he said, waving an arm capable of starting all the traffic on the London and South-Western Railway at a wave. 'Has any gentleman here got a bottle of medicine? A gentleman has taken a bottle of poison (laudanum) by mistake.'

'Where's the man?' I gasped.

'Woking. 'Ere's my orders.' He showed me the telegram, on which were the words to be said. ''E must have left 'is bottle in the train, an' took another by mistake. 'E's been wirin' from Woking awful, an', now I come to think of it, I'm nearly sure I put a bottle of medicine off at Andover.'

'Then the man that took the poison isn't in the train?'

'Lord, no, sir. No one didn't take poison that way. 'E took it away with 'im, in 'is 'ands. 'E's wirin' from Wokin'. My orders was to ask everybody in the train, and I 'ave, an' we're four minutes late now. Are you comin' on, sir? No? Right be'ind!'

There is nothing, unless, perhaps, the English language, more terrible than the workings of an English railway line. An instant before it seemed as though we were going to spend all eternity at Framlyngham Admiral, and now I was watching the tail of the train disappear round the curve of the cutting.

But I was not alone. On the one bench of the down platform sat the largest navvy I have ever seen in my life, softened and made affable (for he smiled generously) with liquor. In his huge hands he nursed an empty tumbler marked 'L. S. W. R.'—marked also, internally, with streaks of blue-gray sediment. Before him, a hand on his shoulder, stood the doctor, and as I

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came within earshot this is what I heard him say: 'Just you hold on to your patience for a minute or two longer, and you'll be as right as ever you were in your life. I'll stay with you till you're better.'

'Lord! I'm comfortable enough,' said the navvy. 'Never felt better in my life.'

Turning to me, the doctor lowered his voice. 'He might have died while that fool conduc—guard was saying his piece. I've fixed him, though. The stuff's due in about five minutes, but there's a heap to him. I don't see how we can make him take exercise.'

For the moment I felt as though seven pounds of crushed ice had been neatly applied in the form of a compress to my lower stomach.

'How—how did you manage it?' I gasped.

'I asked him if he'd have a drink. He was knocking spots out of the car—strength of his constitution, I suppose. He said he'd go 'most anywhere for a drink, so I lured him on to the platform, and loaded him up. Cold-blooded people you Britishers are. That train's gone, and no one seemed to care a cent.'

'We've missed it,' I said.

He looked at me curiously.

'We'll get another before sundown, if that's your only trouble. Say, porter, when's the next train down?'

'Seven forty-five,' said the one porter, and passed out through the wicket-gate into the landscape. It was then three-twenty of a hot and sleepy afternoon. The station was absolutely deserted. The navvy had closed his eyes, and now nodded.

'That's bad,' said the doctor. 'The man, I mean, not the train. We must make him walk somehow—walk up and down.'

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Swiftly as might be, I explained the delicacy of the situation, and the doctor from New York turned a full bronze-green. Then he swore comprehensively at the entire fabric of our glorious Constitution, cursing the English language, root, branch, and paradigm, through its most obscure derivatives. His coat and bag lay on the bench next to the sleeper. Thither he edged cautiously, and I saw treachery in his eye.

What devil of delay possessed him to slip on his spring overcoat, I cannot tell. They say a slight noise rouses a sleeper more surely than a heavy one, and scarcely had the doctor settled himself in his sleeves than the giant waked and seized that silk-faced collar in a hot right hand. There was rage in his face—rage and the realisation of new emotions.

‘I’m—I’m not so comfortable as I were,’ he said from the deeps of his interior. ‘You’ll wait along o’ me, you will.’ He breathed heavily through shut lips.

Now, if there was one thing more than another upon which the doctor had dwelt in his conversation with me, it was upon the essential law-abidingness, not to say gentleness, of his much-misrepresented country. And yet (truly, it may have been no more than a button that irked him) I saw his hand travel backwards to his right hip, clutch at something, and come away empty.

‘He won’t kill you,’ I said. ‘He’ll probably sue you in court, if I know my own people. Better give him some money from time to time.’

‘If he keeps quiet till the stuff gets in its work,’ the doctor answered, ‘I’m all right. If he doesn’t . . . my name is Emory—Julian B. Emory—193 ’Steenth Street, corner of Madison and—’

‘I feel worse than I’ve ever felt,’ said the navvy,

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with suddenness. 'What—did—you—give—me—the—drink—for?'

The matter seemed to be so purely personal that I withdrew to a strategic position on the overhead bridge, and, abiding in the exact centre, looked on from afar.

I could see the white road that ran across the shoulder of Salisbury Plain, unshaded for mile after mile, and a dot in the middle distance, the back of the one porter returning to Framlyngname Admiral, if such a place existed, till seven forty-five. The bell of a church invisible clanked softly. There was a rustle in the horse-chestnuts to the left of the line, and the sound of sheep cropping close.

The peace of Nirvana lay upon the land, and, brooding in it, my elbow on the warm iron girder of the foot-bridge (it is a forty-shilling fine to cross by any other means), I perceived, as never before, how the consequences of our acts run eternal through time and through space. If we impinge never so slightly upon the life of a fellow-mortal, the touch of our personality, like the ripple of a stone cast into a pond, widens and widens in unending circles across the æons, till the far-off gods themselves cannot say where action ceases. Also, it was I who had silently set before the doctor the tumbler of the first-class lavatory compartment now speeding Plymouthward. Yet I was, in spirit at least, a million leagues removed from that unhappy man of another nationality, who had chosen to thrust an inexperienced finger into the workings of an alien life. The machinery was dragging him up and down the sunlit platform. The two men seemed to be learning polka-mazurkas together, and the burden of their song, borne by one deep voice, was: 'What did you give me the drink for?'

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I saw the flash of silver in the doctor's hand. The navy took it and pocketed it with his left; but never for an instant did his strong right leave the doctor's coat-collar, and as the crisis approached, louder and louder rose his bull-like roar: 'What did you give me the drink for?'

They drifted under the great twelve-inch pinned timbers of the footbridge towards the bench, and, I gathered, the time was very near at hand. The stuff was getting in its work. Blue, white, and blue again, rolled over the navy's face in waves, till all settled to one rich clay-bank yellow and—that fell which fell.

I thought of the blowing-up of Hell Gate; of the geysers in the Yellowstone Park; of Jonah and his whale; but the lively original, as I watched it foreshortened from above, exceeded all these things. He staggered to the bench, the heavy wooden seat cramped with iron cramps into the enduring stone, and clung there with his left hand. It quivered and shook, as a breakwater-pile quivers to the rush of landward-racing seas; nor was there lacking, when he caught his breath, the 'scream of a maddened beach dragged down by the tide.' His right hand was upon the doctor's collar, so that the two shook to one paroxysm, pendulums vibrating together, while I, apart, shook with them.

It was colossal—immense; but of certain manifestations the English language stops short. French only, the caryatid French of Victor Hugo, would have described it; so I mourned while I laughed, hastily shuffling and discarding inadequate adjectives. The vehemence of the shock spent itself, and the sufferer half fell, half knelt, across the bench. He was calling now upon God and his wife, huskily, as the wounded bull calls upon the

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unscathed herd to stay. Curiously enough, he used no bad language: that had gone from him with the rest. The doctor exhibited gold. It was taken and retained. So, too, was the grip on the coat-collar.

'If I could stand,' boomed the giant despairingly. 'I'd smash you—you an' your drinks. I'm dyin'—dyin'—dyin'!'

'That's what you think,' said the doctor. 'You'll find it will do you a lot of good'; and, making a virtue of a somewhat imperative necessity, he added: 'I'll stay by you. If you'd let go of me a minute I'd give you something that would settle you.'

'You've settled me now, you damned anarchist. Takin' the bread out of the mouth of an English workin' man! But I'll keep 'old of you till I'm well or dead. I never did you no harm. S'pose I were a little full. They pumped me out once at Guy's with a stummick-pump. I could see that, but I can't see this 'ere, an' it's killin' of me by slow degrees.'

'You'll be all right in half an hour. What do you suppose I'd want to kill you for?' said the doctor, who came of a logical breed.

'Ow do I know? Tell 'em in court. You'll get seven years for this, you body-snatcher. That's what you are—a bloomin' body-snatcher. There's justice, I tell you, in England; and my Union'll prosecute, too. We don't stand no tricks with people's insides 'ere. They gave a woman ten years for a sight less than this. An' you'll 'ave to pay 'undreds an' 'undreds o' pounds, besides a pension to the missus. You'll see, you phys-ickin' furriner. Where's your licence to do such? You'll catch it, I tell you!'

Then I observed, what I had frequently observed

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before, that a man who is but reasonably afraid of an altercation with an alien has a most poignant dread of the operations of foreign law. The doctor's voice was flute-like in its exquisite politeness, as he answered:

'But I've given you a very great deal of money—fif—three pounds, I think.'

'An' what's three pounds for poisonin' the likes o' me? They told me at Guy's I'd fetch twenty—cold—on the slates. Ouh! It's comin' again.'

A second time he was cut down by the foot, as it were, and the straining bench rocked to and fro as I averted my eyes.

It was the very point of perfection in the heart of an English May-day. The unseen tides of the air had turned, and all nature was setting its face with the shadows of the horse-chestnuts towards the peace of the coming night. But there were hours yet, I knew—long, long hours of the eternal English twilight—to the ending of the day. I was well content to be alive—to abandon myself to the drift of Time and Fate; to absorb great peace through my skin, and to love my country with the devotion that three thousand miles of intervening sea bring to fullest flower. And what a garden of Eden it was, this fatted, clipped, and washen land! A man could camp in any open field with more sense of home and security than the stateliest buildings of foreign cities could afford. And the joy was that it was all mine inalienably—groomed hedgerow, spotless road, decent graystone cottage, serried spinney, tasselled copse, apple-bellied hawthorn, and well-grown tree. A light puff of wind—it scattered flakes of may over the gleaming rails—gave me a faint whiff as it might have been of fresh cocoanut, and I knew that the golden gorse was in bloom

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somewhere out of sight. Linnæus had thanked God on his bended knees when he first saw a field of it; and, by the way, the navvy was on his knees too. But he was by no means praying. He was purely disgustful.

The doctor was compelled to bend over him, his face towards the back of the seat, and from what I had seen I supposed the navvy was now dead. If that were the case it would be time for me to go; but I knew that so long as a man trusts himself to the current of Circumstance, reaching out for and rejecting nothing that comes his way, no harm can overtake him. It is the contriver, the schemer, who is caught by the law, and never the philosopher. I knew that when the play was played, Destiny herself would move me on from the corpse; and I felt very sorry for the doctor.

In the far distance, presumably upon the road that led to Framlynghame Admiral, there appeared a vehicle and a horse—the one ancient fly that almost every village can produce at need. This thing was advancing, unpaid by me, towards the station; would have to pass along the deep-cut lane, below the railway-bridge, and come out on the doctor's side. I was in the centre of things, so all sides were alike to me. Here, then, was my machine from the machine. When it arrived, something would happen, or something else. For the rest, I owned my deeply interested soul.

The doctor, by the seat, turned so far as his cramped position allowed, his head over his left shoulder, and laid his right hand upon his lips. I threw back my hat and elevated my eyebrows in the form of a question. The doctor shut his eyes and nodded his head slowly twice or thrice, beckoning me to come. I descended cautiously, and it was as the signs had told. The navvy

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was asleep, empty to the lowest notch; yet his hand clutched still the doctor's collar, and at the lightest movement (the doctor was really very cramped) tightened mechanically, as the hand of a sick woman tightens on that of the watcher. He had dropped, squatting almost upon his heels, and, falling lower, had dragged the doctor over to the left.

The doctor thrust his right hand, which was free, into his pocket, drew forth some keys, and shook his head. The navvy gurgled in his sleep. Silently I dived into my pocket, took out one sovereign, and held it up between finger and thumb. Again the doctor shook his head. Money was not what was lacking to his peace. His bag had fallen from the seat to the ground. He looked towards it, and opened his mouth—O-shape. The catch was not a difficult one, and when I had mastered it, the doctor's right forefinger was sawing the air. With an immense caution, I extracted from the bag such a knife as they use for cutting collops off legs. The doctor frowned, and with his first and second fingers imitated the action of scissors. Again I searched, and found a most diabolical pair of cock-nosed shears, capable of vandyking the interiors of elephants. The doctor then slowly lowered his left shoulder till the navvy's right wrist was supported by the bench, pausing a moment as the spent volcano rumbled anew. Lower and lower the doctor sank, kneeling now by the navvy's side, till his head was on a level with, and just in front of the great hairy fist, and—there was no tension on the coat-collar. Then light dawned on me.

Beginning a little to the right of the spinal column, I cut a huge demilune out of his new spring overcoat, bringing it round as far under his left side (which was

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the right side of the navvy) as I dared. Passing thence swiftly to the back of the seat, and reaching between the splines, I sawed through the silk-faced front on the left-hand side of the coat till the two cuts joined.

Cautiously as the box-turtle of his native heath, the doctor drew away sideways and to the right, with the air of a frustrated burglar coming out from under a bed, and stood up free, one black diagonal shoulder projecting through the gray of his ruined overcoat. I returned the scissors to the bag, snapped the catch, and held all out to him as the wheels of the fly rang hollow under the railway arch.

It came at a footpace past the wicket-gate of the station, and the doctor stopped it with a whisper. It was going some five miles across country to bring home from church some one—I could not catch the name—because his own carriage-horses were lame. Its destination happened to be the one place in all the world that the doctor was most burningly anxious to visit, and he promised the driver untold gold to drive to some ancient flame of his—Helen Blazes, she was called.

‘Aren’t you coming, too?’ he said, bundling his overcoat into his bag.

Now the fly had been so obviously sent to the doctor, and to no one else, that I had no concern with it. Our roads, I saw, divided, and there was, further, a need upon me to laugh.

‘I shall stay here,’ I said. ‘It’s a very pretty country.’

‘My God!’ he murmured, as softly as he shut the door, and I felt that it was a prayer.

Then he went out of my life, and I shaped my course for the railway-bridge. It was necessary to pass by the bench once more, but the wicket was between us. The

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departure of the fly had waked the navvy. He crawled on to the seat, and with malignant eyes watched the driver flog down the road.

'The man inside o' that,' he called, 'as poisoned me. 'E's a body-snatcher. 'E's comin' back again when I'm cold. 'Ere's my evidence!'

He waved his share of the overcoat, and I went my way, because I was hungry. Framlynghame Admiral village is a good two miles from the station, and I waked the holy calm of the evening every step of that way with shouts and yells, casting myself down in the flank of the good green hedge when I was too weak to stand. There was an inn,—a blessed inn with a thatched roof, and peonies in the garden,—and I ordered myself an upper chamber in which the Foresters held their courts, for the laughter was not all out of me. A bewildered woman brought me ham and eggs, and I leaned out of the mulioned window, and laughed between mouthfuls. I sat long above the beer and the perfect smoke that followed, till the light changed in the quiet street, and I began to think of the seven forty-five down, and all that world of the 'Arabian Nights' I had quitted.

Descending, I passed a giant in moleskins who filled the low-ceiled tap-room. Many empty plates stood before him, and beyond them a fringe of the Framlynghame Admiralty, to whom he was unfolding a wondrous tale of anarchy, of body-snatching, of bribery, and the Valley of the Shadow from the which he was but newly risen. And as he talked he ate, and as he ate he drank, for there was much room in him; and anon he paid royally, speaking of justice and the law, before whom all Englishmen are equal, and all foreigners and anarchists vermin and slime.

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On my way to the station he passed me with great strides, his head high among the low-flying bats, his feet firm on the packed road metal, his fists clenched, and his breath coming sharply. There was a beautiful smell in the air—the smell of white dust, bruised nettles, and smoke, that brings tears to the throat of a man who sees his country but seldom—a smell like the echoes of the lost talk of lovers; the infinitely suggestive odour of an immemorial civilisation. It was a perfect walk; and, lingering on every step, I came to the station just as the one porter lighted the last of a truck-load of lamps, and set them back in the lamp-room, while he dealt tickets to four or five of the population, who, not contented with their own peace, thought fit to travel. It was no ticket that the navvy seemed to need. He was sitting on a bench wrathfully grinding a tumbler into fragments with his heel. I abode in obscurity at the end of the platform, interested as ever, thank heaven, in my surroundings. There was a jar of wheels on the road. The navvy rose as they approached, strode through the wicket, and laid a hand upon a horse's bridle that brought the beast up on his hireling hind-legs. It was the providential fly coming back, and for a moment I wondered whether the doctor had been mad enough to revisit his practice.

‘Get away; you’re drunk,’ said the driver.

‘I’m not,’ said the navvy. ‘I’ve been waitin’ ’ere hours and hours. Come out, you beggar inside there.’

‘Go on, driver,’ said a voice I did not know—a crisp, clear English voice.

‘All right,’ said the navvy. ‘You wouldn’t ’ear me when I was polite. Now will you come?’

There was a chasm in the side of the fly, for he had

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wrenched the door bodily off its hinges, and was feeling within purposefully. A well-booted leg rewarded him, and there came out, not with delight, hopping on one foot, a round and gray-haired Englishman, from whose armpits dropped hymn-books, but from his mouth an altogether different service of song.

‘Come on, you bloomin’ body-snatcher! You thought I was dead, did you?’ roared the navvy. And the respectable gentleman came accordingly, inarticulate with rage.

‘‘Ere’s a man murderin’ the Squire,’ the driver shouted, and fell from his box upon the navvy’s neck.

To do them justice, the people of Framlyngham Admiral, so many as were on the platform, rallied to the call in the best spirit of feudalism. It was the one porter who beat the navvy on the nose with a ticket-punch, but it was the three third-class tickets who attached themselves to his legs and freed the captive.

‘Send for a constable! lock him up!’ said that man, adjusting his collar; and unitedly they cast him into the lamp-room, and turned the key, while the driver mourned over the wrecked fly.

Till then the navvy, whose only desire was justice, had kept his temper nobly. Then he went Berserk before our amazed eyes. The door of the lamp-room was generously constructed, and would not give an inch, but the window he tore from its fastenings and hurled outwards. The one porter counted the damage in a loud voice, and the others, arming themselves with agricultural implements from the station garden, kept up a ceaseless winnowing before the window, themselves backed close to the wall, and bade the prisoner think of the gaol. He answered little to the point, so far as

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they could understand; but seeing that his exit was impeded, he took a lamp and hurled it through the wrecked sash. It fell on the metals and went out. With inconceivable velocity, the others, fifteen in all, followed looking like rockets in the gloom, and with the last (he could have had no plan) the Berserk rage left him as the doctor's deadly brewage waked up, under the stimulus of violent exercise and a very full meal, to one last cataclysmal exhibition, and—we heard the whistle of the seven forty-five down.

They were all acutely interested in as much of the wreck as they could see, for the station smelt to heaven of oil, and the engine skittered over broken glass like a terrier in a cucumber frame. The guard had to hear of it, and the Squire had his version of the brutal assault, and heads were out all along the carriages as I found me a seat.

‘What is the row?’ said a young man, as I entered. ‘Man drunk?’

‘Well, the symptoms, so far as my observation has gone, more resemble those of Asiatic cholera than anything else,’ I answered, slowly and judicially, that every word might carry weight in the appointed scheme of things. Till then, you will observe, I had taken no part in that war.

He was an Englishman, but he collected his belongings as swiftly as had the American, ages before, and leaped upon the platform, crying, ‘Can I be of any service? I’m a doctor.’

From the lamp-room I heard a wearied voice wailing: ‘Another bloomin’ doctor!’

And the seven forty-five carried me on, a step nearer to Eternity, by the road that is worn and seamed and channelled with the passions, and weaknesses, and warring interests of man who is immortal and master of his fate.

THE BRUSHWOOD BOY

(1895)

‘Girls and boys, come out to play:
The moon is shining as bright as day!
Leave your supper and leave your sleep,
And come with your playfellows out in the street!
Up the ladder and down the wall—’

A CHILD of three sat up in his crib and screamed at the top of his voice, his fists clinched and his eyes full of terror. At first no one heard, for his nursery lay in the west wing, and the nurse was talking to a gardener among the laurels. Then the housekeeper passed that way, and hurried to soothe him. He was her special pet, and she disapproved of the nurse.

‘What was it, then? What was it, then? There’s nothing to frighten him, Georgie dear.’

‘It was—it was a policeman! He was on the Down—I saw him! He came in. Jane said he would.’

‘Policemen don’t come into houses, dearie. Turn over, and take my hand.’

‘I saw him—on the Down. He came here. Where is your hand, Harper?’

The housekeeper waited till the sobs changed to the regular breathing of sleep before she stole out.

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'Jane, what nonsense have you been telling Master Georgie about policemen?'

'I haven't told him anything.'

'You have. He's been dreaming about them.'

'We met Tisdall on Dowhead when we were in the donkey-cart this morning. P'raps that's what put it into his head.'

'Oh! Now you aren't going to frighten the child into fits with your silly tales, and the master know nothing about it. If ever I catch you again,' etc.

A child of six was telling himself stories as he lay in bed. It was a new power, and he kept it a secret. A month before it had occurred to him to carry on a nursery tale left unfinished by his mother, and he was delighted to find the tale as it came out of his own head just as surprising as though he were listening to it 'all new from the beginning.' There was a prince in that tale, and he killed dragons, but only for one night. Ever afterwards Georgie dubbed himself prince, pasha, giant-killer, and all the rest (you see, he could not tell any one, for fear of being laughed at), and his tales faded gradually into dreamland, where adventures were so many that he could not recall the half of them. They all began in the same way, or, as Georgie explained to the shadows of the night-light, there was 'the same starting-off place'—a pile of brushwood stacked somewhere near a beach; and round this pile Georgie found himself running races with little boys and girls. These ended, ships ran high up the dry land and opened into cardboard boxes; or gilt-and-green iron railings, that surrounded beautiful gardens, turned all soft, and could be walked through and overthrown so long as he remem-

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bered it was only a dream. He could never hold that knowledge more than a few seconds ere things became real, and instead of pushing down houses full of grown-up people (a just revenge), he sat miserably upon gigantic door-steps trying to sing the multiplication-table up to four times six.

The princess of his tales was a person of wonderful beauty (she came from the old illustrated edition of Grimm, now out of print), and as she always applauded Georgie's valour among the dragons and buffaloes, he gave her the two finest names he had ever heard in his life—Annie and Louise, pronounced 'Annie-an-louise.' When the dreams swamped the stories, she would change into one of the little girls round the brushwood-pile, still keeping her title and crown. She saw Georgie drown once in a dream-sea by the beach (it was the day after he had been taken to bathe in a real sea by his nurse); and he said as he sank: 'Poor Annie-an-louise! She'll be sorry for me now!' But 'Annie-an-louise,' walking slowly on the beach, called, '“Ha! ha! said the duck, laughing,”' which to a waking mind might not seem to bear on the situation. It consoled Georgie at once, and must have been some kind of spell, for it raised the bottom of the deep, and he waded out with a twelve-inch flower-pot on each foot. As he was strictly forbidden to meddle with flower-pots in real life, he felt triumphantly wicked.

The movements of the grown-ups, whom Georgie tolerated, but did not pretend to understand, removed his world, when he was seven years old, to a place called 'Oxford-on-a-visit.' Here were huge buildings surrounded by vast prairies, with streets of infinite length,

and, above all, something called the 'buttery,' which Georgie was dying to see, because he knew it must be greasy, and therefore delightful. He perceived how correct were his judgments when his nurse led him through a stone arch into the presence of an enormously fat man, who asked him if he would like some bread and cheese. Georgie was used to eat all round the clock, so he took what 'buttery' gave him, and would have taken some brown liquid called 'auditale,' but that his nurse led him away to an afternoon performance of a thing called 'Pepper's Ghost.' This was intensely thrilling. People's heads came off and flew all over the stage, and skeletons danced bone by bone, while Mr. Pepper himself, beyond question a man of the worst, waved his arms and flapped a long gown, and in a deep bass voice (Georgie had never heard a man sing before) told of his sorrows unspeakable. Some grown-up or other tried to explain that the illusion was made with mirrors, and that there was no need to be frightened. Georgie did not know what illusions were, but he did know that a mirror was the looking-glass with the ivory handle on his mother's dressing-table. Therefore the 'grown-up' was 'just saying things' after the distressing custom of 'grown-ups,' and Georgie cast about for amusement between scenes. Next to him sat a little girl dressed all in black, her hair combed off her forehead exactly like the girl in the book called 'Alice in Wonderland,' which had been given him on his last birthday. The little girl looked at Georgie, and Georgie looked at her. There seemed to be no need of any further introduction.

'I've got a cut on my thumb,' said he. It was the first work of his first real knife, a savage triangular hack, and he esteemed it a most valuable possession.

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‘I’m tho thorry!’ she lisped. ‘Let me look—pleathe.’

‘There’s a di-ack-lum plaster on, but it’s all raw under,’ Georgie answered, complying.

‘Dothent it hurt?’—her gray eyes were full of pity and interest.

‘Awf’ly. Perhaps it will give me lockjaw.’

‘It lookth very horrid. I’m tho thorry!’ She put a forefinger to his hand, and held her head sidewise for a better view.

Here the nurse turned and shook him severely. ‘You mustn’t talk to strange little girls, Master Georgie.’

‘She isn’t strange. She’s very nice. I like her, an’ I’ve showed her my new cut.’

‘The idea! You change places with me.’

She moved him over, and shut out the little girl from his view, while the grown-up behind renewed the futile explanations.

‘I am not afraid, truly,’ said the boy, wriggling in despair; ‘but why don’t you go to sleep in the afternoon same as Provostoforiel?’

Georgie had been introduced to a grown-up of that name, who slept in his presence without apology. Georgie understood that he was the most important grown-up in Oxford; hence he strove to gild his rebuke with flatteries. This grown-up did not seem to like it, but he collapsed, and Georgie lay back in his seat, silent and enraptured. Mr. Pepper was singing again, and the deep, ringing voice, the red fire, and the misty, waving gown all seemed to be mixed up with the little girl who had been so kind about his cut. When the performance was ended she nodded to Georgie, and Georgie nodded in return. He spoke no more than was necessary till bedtime, but meditated on new colours,

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and sounds, and lights, and music, and things as far as he understood them; the deep-mouthed agony of Mr. Pepper mingling with the little girl's lisp. That night he made a new tale, from which he shamelessly removed the Rapunzel-Rapunzel-let-down-your-hair princess, gold crown, Grimm edition, and all, and put a new Annie-an-louise in her place. So it was perfectly right and natural that when he came to the brushwood-pile he should find her waiting for him, her hair combed off her forehead, more like Alice in Wonderland than ever, and the races and adventures began.

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Ten years at an English public school do not encourage dreaming. Georgie won his growth and chest measurement, and a few other things which did not appear in the bills, under a system of cricket, football, and paper-chases, from four to five days a week, which provided for three lawful cuts of a ground-ash if any boy absented himself from these entertainments. He became a rumple-collared, dusty-hatted fag of the Lower Third, and a light half-back at Little Side football; was pushed and prodded through the slack back-waters of the Lower Fourth, where the raffle of a school generally accumulates; won his 'second fifteen' cap at football, enjoyed the dignity of a study with two companions in it, and began to look forward to office as a sub-prefect. At last he blossomed into full glory as head of the school, ex-officio captain of the games; head of his house, where he and his lieutenants preserved discipline and decency among seventy boys from twelve to seventeen; general arbiter in the quarrels that spring up among the touchy Sixth—and intimate friend and ally of the Head himself. When he stepped forth in the black jersey, white

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knickers, and black stockings of the First Fifteen, the new match-ball under his arm, and his old and frayed cap at the back of his head, the small fry of the lower forms stood apart and worshipped, and the 'new caps' of the team talked to him ostentatiously, that the world might see. And so, in summer, when he came back to the pavilion after a slow but eminently safe game, it mattered not whether he had made nothing or, as once happened, a hundred and three, the school shouted just the same, and womenfolk who had come to look at the match looked at Cottar—Cottar major; 'that's Cottar!' Above all, he was responsible for that thing called the tone of the school, and few realise with what passionate devotion a certain type of boy throws himself into this work. Home was a far-away country, full of ponies and fishing, and shooting, and men-visitors who interfered with one's plans; but school was his real world, where things of vital importance happened, and crises arose that must be dealt with promptly and quietly. Not for nothing was it written, 'Let the Consuls look to it that the Republic takes no harm,' and Georgie was glad to be back in authority when the holidays ended. Behind him, but not too near, was the wise and temperate Head, now suggesting the wisdom of the serpent, now counselling the mildness of the dove; leading him on to see, more by half-hints than by any direct word, how boys and men are all of a piece, and how he who can handle the one will assuredly in time control the other.

For the rest, the school was not encouraged to dwell on its emotions, but rather to keep in hard condition, to avoid false quantities, and to enter the army direct, without the help of the expensive London cram-

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mer, under whose roof young blood learns too much. Cottar major went the way of hundreds before him. The Head gave him six months' final polish, taught him what kind of answers best please a certain kind of examiners, and handed him over to the properly constituted authorities, who passed him into Sandhurst. Here he had sense enough to see that he was in the Lower Third once more, and behaved with respect towards his seniors, till they in turn respected him, and he was promoted to the rank of corporal, and sat in authority over mixed peoples with all the vices of men and boys combined. His reward was another string of athletic cups, a good-conduct sword, and, at last, Her Majesty's Commission as a subaltern in a first-class line regiment. He did not know that he bore with him from school and college a character worth much fine gold, but was pleased to find his mess so kindly. He had plenty of money of his own; his training had set the public-school mask upon his face, and had taught him how many were the 'things no fellow can do.' By virtue of the same training he kept his pores open and his mouth shut.

The regular working of the Empire shifted his world to India, where he tasted utter loneliness in subaltern's quarters—one room and one bullock-trunk—and, with his mess, learned the new life from the beginning. But there were horses in the land—ponies at reasonable price; there was polo for such as could afford it; there were the disreputable remnants of a pack of hounds, and Cottar worried his way along without too much despair. It dawned on him that a regiment in India was nearer the chance of active service than he had conceived, and that a man might as well study his profes-

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sion. A major of the new school backed this idea with enthusiasm, and he and Cottar accumulated a library of military works, and read and argued and disputed far into the nights. But the adjutant said the old thing: 'Get to know your men, young 'un, and they'll follow you anywhere. That's all you want—know your men.' Cottar thought he knew them fairly well at cricket and the regimental sports, but he never realised the true inwardness of them till he was sent off with a detachment of twenty to sit down in a mud fort near a rushing river which was spanned by a bridge of boats. When the floods came they went forth and hunted strayed pontoons along the banks. Otherwise there was nothing to do, and the men got drunk, gambled, and quarrelled. They were a sickly crew, for a junior subaltern is by custom saddled with the worst men. Cottar endured their rioting as long as he could, and then sent down-country for a dozen pairs of boxing-gloves.

'I wouldn't blame you for fightin',' said he, 'if you only knew how to use your hands; but you don't. Take these things and I'll show you.' The men appreciated his efforts. Now, instead of blaspheming and swearing at a comrade, and threatening to shoot him, they could take him apart and soothe themselves to exhaustion. As one explained whom Cottar found with a shut eye and a diamond-shaped mouth spitting blood through an embrasure: 'We tried it with the gloves, sir, for twenty minutes, and that done us no good, sir. Then we took off the gloves and tried it that way for another twenty minutes, same as you showed us, sir, an' that done us a world o' good. 'Twasn't fightin', sir; there was a bet on.'

Cottar dared not laugh, but he invited his men to

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other sports, such as racing across country in shirt and trousers after a trail of torn paper, and to single-stick in the evenings, till the native population, who had a lust for sport in every form, wished to know whether the white men understood wrestling. They sent in an ambassador, who took the soldiers by the neck and threw them about the dust; and the entire command were all for this new game. They spent money on learning new falls and holds, which was better than buying other doubtful commodities; and the peasantry grinned five deep round the tournaments.

That detachment, who had gone up in bullock-carts, returned to headquarters at an average rate of thirty miles a day, fair heel-and-toe; no sick, no prisoners, and no court-martials pending. They scattered themselves among their friends, singing the praises of their lieutenant and looking for causes of offence.

'How did you do it, young 'un?' the adjutant asked.

'Oh, I sweated the beef off 'em, and then I sweated some muscle on to 'em. It was rather a lark.'

'If that's your way of lookin' at it, we can give you all the larks you want. Young Davies isn't feelin' quite fit, and he's next for detachment duty. Care to go for him?'

'Sure he wouldn't mind? I don't want to shove myself forward, you know.'

'You needn't bother on Davies's account. We'll give you the sweepin's of the corps, and you can see what you can make of 'em.'

'All right,' said Cottar. 'It's better fun than loafin' about cantonments.'

'Rummy thing,' said the adjutant, after Cottar had returned to his wilderness with twenty other devils

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worse than the first. 'If Cottar only knew it, half the women in the station would give their eyes—confound 'em!—to have the young 'un in tow.'

'That accounts for Mrs. Elery sayin' I was workin' my nice new boy too hard,' said a wing commander.

'Oh yes; and "Why doesn't he come to the band-stand in the evenings?" and "Can't I get him to make up a four at tennis with the Hammon girls?"' the adjutant snorted. 'Look at young Davies makin' an ass of himself over mutton-dressed-as-lamb old enough to be his mother!'

'No one can accuse young Cottar of runnin' after women, white or black,' the major replied thoughtfully. 'But, then, that's the kind that generally goes the worst mucker in the end.'

'Not Cottar. I've only run across one of his muster before—a fellow called Ingles, in South Africa. He was just the same hard-trained, athletic-sports build of animal. Always kept himself in the pink of condition. Didn't do him much good, though. Shot at Wesselstroom the week before Majuba. Wonder how the young 'un will lick his detachment into shape.'

Cottar turned up six weeks later, on foot, with his pupils. He never told his experiences, but the men spoke enthusiastically, and fragments of it leaked back to the colonel through sergeants, batmen, and the like.

There was great jealousy between the first and second detachments, but the men united in adoring Cottar, and their way of showing it was by sparing him all the trouble that men know how to make for an unloved officer. He sought popularity as little as he had sought it at school, and therefore it came to him. He favoured no one—not even when the company sloven pulled the

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company cricket-match out of the fire with an unexpected forty-three at the last moment. There was very little getting round him, for he seemed to know by instinct exactly when and where to head off a malingerer; but he did not forget that the difference between a dazed and sulky junior of the upper school and a bewildered, browbeaten lump of a private fresh from the depot was very small indeed. The sergeants, seeing these things, told him secrets generally hid from young officers. His words were quoted as barrack authority on bets in canteen and at tea; and the veriest shrew of the corps, bursting with charges against other women who had used the cooking-ranges out of turn, forbore to speak when Cottar, as the regulations ordained, asked of a morning if there were 'any complaints.'

'I'm full o' complaints,' said Mrs. Corporal Morrison, 'an' I'd kill O'Halloran's fat cow of a wife any day, but ye know how it is. 'E puts 'is head just inside the door, an' looks down 'is blessed nose so bashful, an' 'e whispers, "Any complaints?" Ye can't complain after that. I want to kiss him. Some day I think I will. Heigho-ho! She'll be a lucky woman that gets Young Innocence. See 'im now, girls. Do yer blame me?'

Cottar was cantering across to polo, and he looked a very satisfactory figure of a man as he gave easily to the first excited bucks of his pony, and slipped over a low mud wall to the practice-ground. There were more than Mrs. Corporal Morrison who felt as she did. But Cottar was busy for eleven hours of the day. He did not care to have his tennis spoiled by petticoats in the court; and after one long afternoon at a garden-party, he explained to his major that this sort of thing was 'futile piffle,' and the major laughed. Theirs was not a

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married mess, except for the colonel's wife, and Cottar stood in awe of the good lady. She said 'my regiment,' and the world knows what that means. None the less, when they wanted her to give away the prizes after a shooting-match, and she refused because one of the prize-winners was married to a girl who had made a jest of her behind her broad back, the mess ordered Cottar to 'tackle her,' in his best calling-kit. This he did, simply and laboriously, and she gave way altogether.

'She only wanted to know the facts of the case,' he explained. 'I just told her, and she saw at once.'

'Ye-es,' said the adjutant. 'I expect that's what she did. 'Comin' to the Fusiliers' dance to-night, Galahad?'

'No, thanks. I've got a fight on with the major.' The virtuous apprentice sat up till midnight in the major's quarters, with a stop-watch and a pair of compasses, shifting little painted lead blocks about a four-inch map.

Then he turned in and slept the sleep of innocence, which is full of healthy dreams. One peculiarity of his dreams he noticed at the beginning of his second hot weather. Two or three times a month they duplicated or ran in series. He would find himself sliding into dreamland by the same road—a road that ran along a beach near a pile of brushwood. To the right lay the sea, sometimes at full tide, sometimes withdrawn to the very horizon; but he knew it for the same sea. By that road he would travel over a swell of rising ground covered with short, withered grass, into valleys of wonder and unreason. Beyond the ridge, which was crowned with some sort of street-lamp, anything was possible; but up to the lamp it seemed to him that he knew the road as well as he knew the parade-ground. He learned

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to look forward to the place; for, once there, he was sure of a good night's rest, and Indian hot weather can be rather trying. First, shadowy under closing eyelids, would come the outline of the brushwood-pile; next the white sand of the beach road, almost overhanging the black, changeful sea; then the turn inland and uphill to the single light. When he was unrestful for any reason, he would tell himself how he was sure to get there—sure to get there—if he shut his eyes and surrendered to the drift of things. But one night after a foolishly hard hour's polo (the thermometer was 94 degrees in his quarters at ten o'clock), sleep stood away from him altogether, though he did his best to find the well-known road, the point where true sleep began. At last he saw the brushwood-pile, and hurried along to the ridge, for behind him he felt was the wide-awake, sultry world. He reached the lamp in safety, tingling with drowsiness, when a policeman—a common country policeman—sprang up before him and touched him on the shoulder ere he could dive into the dim valley below. He was filled with terror,—the hopeless terror of dreams,—for the policeman said, in the awful, distinct voice of the dream-people, 'I am Policeman Day coming back from the City of Sleep. You come with me.' Georgie knew it was true—that just beyond him in the valley lay the lights of the City of Sleep, where he would have been sheltered, and that this Policeman Thing had full power and authority to head him back to miserable wakefulness. He found himself looking at the moonlight on the wall, dripping with fright; and he never overcame that horror, though he met the policeman several times that hot weather, and his coming was always the forerunner of a bad night.

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But other dreams—perfectly absurd ones—filled him with an incommunicable delight. All those that he remembered began by the brushwood-pile. For instance, he found a small clockwork steamer (he had noticed it many nights before) lying by the sea-road, and stepped into it, whereupon it moved with surpassing swiftness over an absolutely level sea. This was glorious, for he felt he was exploring great matters; and it stopped at a lily carved in stone, which, most naturally, floated on the water. Seeing the lily was labelled ‘Hong-Kong,’ Georgie said: ‘Of course. This is precisely what I expected Hong-Kong would be like. How magnificent!’ Thousands of miles farther on it halted at yet another stone lily, labelled ‘Java’; and this again delighted him hugely, because he knew that now he was at the world’s end. But the little boat ran on and on till it stopped in a deep fresh-water lock, the sides of which were carven marble, green with moss. Lily-pads lay on the water, and reeds arched above. Some one moved among the reeds—some one whom Georgie knew he had travelled to this world’s end to reach. Therefore everything was entirely well with him. He was unspeakably happy, and vaulted over the ship’s side to find this person. When his feet touched that still water, it changed, with the rustle of unrolling maps, to nothing less than a sixth quarter of the globe, beyond the most remote imaginings of man—a place where islands were coloured yellow and blue, their lettering strung across their faces. They gave on unknown seas, and Georgie’s urgent desire was to return swiftly across this floating atlas to known bearings. He told himself repeatedly that it was no good to hurry; but still he hurried desperately, and the islands slipped and slid under his feet,

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the straits yawned and widened, till he found himself utterly lost in the world's fourth dimension, with no hope of return. Yet only a little distance away he could see the old world with the rivers and mountain-chains marked according to the Sandhurst rules of map-making. Then that person for whom he had come to the Lily Lock (that was its name) ran up across unexplored territories, and showed him a way. They fled hand in hand till they reached a road that spanned ravines, and ran along the edge of precipices, and was tunnelled through mountains. 'This goes to our brushwood-pile,' said his companion; and all his trouble was at an end. He took a pony, because he understood that this was the Thirty-Mile-Ride, and he must ride swiftly; and raced through the clattering tunnels and round the curves, always downhill, till he heard the sea to his left, and saw it raging under a full moon against sandy cliffs. It was heavy going, but he recognised the nature of the country, the dark purple downs inland, and the bents that whistled in the wind. The road was eaten away in places, and the sea lashed at him—black, foamless tongues of smooth and glossy rollers; but he was sure that there was less danger from the sea than from 'Them,' whoever 'They' were, inland to his right. He knew, too, that he would be safe if he could reach the down with the lamp on it. This came as he expected: he saw the one light a mile ahead along the beach, dismounted, turned to the right, walked quietly over to the brushwood-pile, found the little steamer had returned to the beach whence he had unmoored it, and—must have fallen asleep, for he could remember no more. 'I'm gettin' the hang of the geography of that place,' he said to himself, as he shaved next morning. 'I must

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have made some sort of circle. Let's see. The Thirty-Mile-Ride (now how the deuce did I know it was called the Thirty-Mile Ride?) joins the sea-road beyond the first down where the lamp is. And that atlas-country lies at the back of the Thirty-Mile-Ride, somewhere out to the right beyond the hills and tunnels. Rummy thing, dreams. 'Wonder what makes mine fit into each other so?'

He continued on his solid way through the recurring duties of the seasons. The regiment was shifted to another station, and he enjoyed road marching for two months, with a good deal of mixed shooting thrown in; and when they reached their new cantonments he became a member of the local Tent Club, and chased the mighty boar on horseback with a short stabbing-spear. There he met the mahseer of the Poonch, beside whom the tarpon is as a herring, and he who lands him can say that he is a fisherman. This was as new and as fascinating as the big-game shooting that fell to his portion, when he had himself photographed for the mother's benefit, sitting on the flank of his first tiger.

Then the adjutant was promoted, and Cottar rejoiced with him, for he admired the adjutant greatly, and wondered who might be big enough to fill his place; so that he nearly collapsed when the mantle fell on his own shoulders, and the colonel said a few sweet things that made him blush. An adjutant's position does not differ materially from that of head of the school, and Cottar stood in the same relation to the colonel as he had to his old Head in England. Only, tempers wear out in hot weather, and things were said and done that tried him sorely, and he made glorious blunders, from which the regimental sergeant-major pulled him with a loyal soul

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and a shut mouth. Slovens and incompetents raged against him; the weak-minded strove to lure him from the ways of justice; the small-minded—yea, men who Cottar believed would never do 'things no fellow can do'—imputed motives mean and circuitous to actions that he had not spent a thought upon; and he tasted injustice, and it made him very sick. But his consolation came on parade, when he looked down the full companies, and reflected how few were in hospital or cells, and wondered when the time would come to try the machine of his love and labour. But they needed and expected the whole of a man's working-day, and maybe three or four hours of the night. Curiously enough, he never dreamed about the regiment as he was popularly supposed to. The mind, set free from the day's doings, generally ceased working altogether, or, if it moved at all, carried him along the old beach road to the downs, the lamp-post, and, once in a while, to terrible Policeman Day. The second time that he returned to the world's lost continent (this was a dream that repeated itself again and again, with variations, on the same ground) he knew that if he only sat still the person from the Lily Lock would help him; and he was not disappointed. Sometimes he was trapped in mines of vast depth hollowed out of the heart of the world, where men in torment chanted echoing songs; and he heard this person coming along through the galleries, and everything was made safe and delightful. They met again in low-roofed Indian railway carriages that halted in a garden surrounded by gilt-and-green railings, where a mob of stony white people, all unfriendly, sat at breakfast-tables covered with roses, and separated Georgie from his companion, while underground voices sang

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deep-voiced songs. Georgie was filled with enormous despair till they two met again. They forgathered in the middle of an endless hot tropic night, and crept into a huge house that stood, he knew, somewhere north of the railway station where the people ate among the roses. It was surrounded with gardens, all moist and dripping; and in one room, reached through leagues of whitewashed passages, a Sick Thing lay in bed. Now the least noise, Georgie knew, would unchain some waiting horror, and his companion knew it too; but when their eyes met across the bed, Georgie was disgusted to see that she was a child—a little girl in strapped shoes, with her black hair combed back from her forehead.

‘What disgraceful folly!’ he thought. ‘Now she could do nothing whatever if Its head came off.’

Then the thing coughed, and the ceiling shattered down in plaster on the mosquito-netting, and ‘They’ rushed in from all quarters. He dragged the child through the stifling garden, voices chanting behind them, and they rode the Thirty-Mile-Ride under whip and spur along the sandy beach by the booming sea, till they came to the downs, the lamp-post, and the brushwood-pile, which was safety. Very often dreams would break up about them in this fashion, and they would be separated, to endure awful adventures alone. But the most amusing times were when he and she had a clear understanding that it was all make-believe, and walked through mile-wide roaring rivers without even taking off their shoes, or set light to populous cities to see how they would burn, and were rude as any children to the vague shadows met in their rambles. Later in the night they were sure to suffer for this, either at the hands of the Railway People eating among the roses, or

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in the tropic uplands at the far end of the Thirty-Mile-Ride. Together, this did not much affright them; but often Georgie would hear her shrill cry of 'Boy! Boy!' half a world away, and hurry to her rescue before 'They' maltreated her.

He and she explored the dark purple downs as far inland from the brushwood-pile as they dared, but that was always a dangerous matter. The interior was filled with 'Them,' and 'They' went about singing in the hollows, and Georgie and she felt safer on or near the seaboard. So thoroughly had he come to know the place of his dreams that even waking he accepted it as a real country, and made a rough sketch of it. He kept his own counsel, of course; but the permanence of the land puzzled him. His ordinary dreams were as formless and as fleeting as any healthy dreams could be, but once at the brushwood-pile he moved within known limits and could see where he was going. There were months at a time when nothing notable crossed his sleep. Then the dreams would come in a batch of five or six, and next morning the map that he kept in his writing-case would be written up to date, for Georgie was a most methodical person. There was, indeed, a danger—his seniors said so—of his developing into a regular 'Auntie Fuss' of an adjutant, and when an officer once takes to old-maidism there is more hope for the virgin of seventy than for him.

But fate sent the change that was needed, in the shape of a little winter campaign on the border, which, after the manner of little campaigns, flashed out into a very ugly war; and Cottar's regiment was chosen among the first.

'Now,' said a major, 'this'll shake the cobwebs out of

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us all—especially you, Galahad; and we can see what your hen-with-one-chick attitude has done for the regiment.’

Cottar nearly wept with joy as the campaign went forward. They were fit—physically fit beyond the other troops; they were good children in camp, wet or dry, fed or unfed; and they followed their officers with the quick suppleness and trained obedience of a first-class football fifteen. They were cut off from their apology for a base, and cheerfully cut their way back to it again; they crowned and cleaned out hills full of the enemy with the precision of well-broken dogs of chase; and in the hour of retreat, when, hampered with the sick and wounded of the column, they were persecuted down eleven miles of waterless valley, they, serving as rearguard, covered themselves with a great glory in the eyes of fellow-professionals. Any regiment can advance, but few know how to retreat with a sting in the tail. Then they turned to and made roads, most often under fire, and dismantled some inconvenient mud redoubts. They were the last corps to be withdrawn when the rubbish of the campaign was all swept up; and after a month in standing camp, which tries morals severely, they departed to their own place singing—

‘ ‘E’s goin’ to do without ’em—

’Don’t want ’em any more;

’E’s goin’ to do without ’em,

As ’e’s often done before;

’E’s goin’ to be a martyr

On a ’ighly novel plan,

An’ all the boys and girls will say,

“Ow! what a nice young man—man—man!

Ow! what a nice young man!”’

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There came out a 'Gazette,' in which Cottar found that he had been behaving with 'courage and coolness and discretion' in all his capacities; that he had assisted the wounded under fire, and blown in a gate, also under fire. Net result, his captaincy and a brevet majority, coupled with the Distinguished Service Order.

As to his wounded, he explained that they were both heavy men, whom he could lift more easily than any one else. 'Otherwise, of course, I should have sent out one of my chaps; and, of course, about that gate business, we were safe the minute we were well under the walls.' But this did not prevent his men from cheering him furiously whenever they saw him, or the mess from giving him a dinner on the eve of his departure to England. (A year's leave was among the things he had 'snaffled out of the campaign,' to use his own words.) The doctor, who had taken quite as much as was good for him, quoted poetry about 'a good blade carving the casques of men,' and so on, and everybody told Cottar that he was an excellent person; but when he rose to make his maiden speech they shouted so that he was understood to say, 'It isn't any use tryin' to speak with you chaps rottin' me like this. Let's have some pool.'

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It is not unpleasant to spend eight-and-twenty days in an easy-going steamer on warm waters, in the company of a woman who lets you see that you are head and shoulders superior to the rest of the world, even though that woman may be, and most often is, ten counted years your senior. P. O. boats are not lighted with the disgustful particularity of Atlantic liners. There is more phosphorescence at the bows, and greater silence and darkness by the hand-steering gear aft.

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Awful things might have happened to Georgie, but for the little fact that he had never studied the first principles of the game he was expected to play. So when Mrs. Zuleika, at Aden, told him how motherly an interest she felt in his welfare, medals, brevet, and all, Georgie took her at the foot of the letter, and promptly talked of his own mother, three hundred miles nearer each day, of his home, and so forth, all the way up the Red Sea. It was much easier than he had supposed to converse with a woman for an hour at a time. Then Mrs. Zuleika, turning from parental affection, spoke of love in the abstract as a thing not unworthy of study, and in discreet twilights after dinner demanded confidences. Georgie would have been delighted to supply them, but he had none, and did not know it was his duty to manufacture them. Mrs. Zuleika expressed surprise and unbelief, and asked those questions which deep asks of deep. She learned all that was necessary to conviction, and, being very much a woman, resumed (Georgie never knew that she had abandoned) the motherly attitude.

‘Do you know,’ she said, somewhere in the Mediterranean, ‘I think you’re the very dearest boy I have ever met in my life, and I’d like you to remember me a little. You will when you are older, but I want you to remember me now. You’ll make some girl very happy.’

‘Oh! ’Hope so,’ said Georgie, gravely; ‘but there’s heaps of time for marryin’, an’ all that sort of thing, ain’t there?’

‘That depends. Here are your bean-bags for the Ladies’ Competition. I think I’m growing too old to care for these tamashas.’

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They were getting up sports, and Georgie was on the committee. He never noticed how perfectly the bags were sewn, but another woman did, and smiled—once. He liked Mrs. Zuleika greatly. She was a bit old, of course, but uncommonly nice. There was no nonsense about her.

A few nights after they passed Gibraltar his dream returned to him. She who waited by the brushwood-pile was no longer a little girl, but a woman with black hair that grew into a 'widow's peak,' combed back from her forehead. He knew her for the child in black, the companion of the last six years, and, as it had been in the time of the meetings on the Lost Continent, he was filled with delight unspeakable. 'They,' for some dreamland reason, were friendly or had gone away that night, and the two flitted together over all their country, from the brushwood-pile up the Thirty-Mile-Ride, till they saw the House of the Sick Thing, a pin-point in the distance to the left; stamped through the Railway Waiting-room where the roses lay on the spread breakfast-tables; and returned, by the ford and the city they had once burned for sport, to the great swells of the downs under the lamp-post. Wherever they moved a strong singing followed them underground, but this night there was no panic. All the land was empty except for themselves, and at the last (they were sitting by the lamp-post hand in hand) she turned and kissed him. He woke with a start, staring at the waving curtain of the cabin door; he could almost have sworn that the kiss was real.

Next morning the ship was rolling in a Biscay sea, and people were not happy; but as Georgie came to breakfast, shaven, tubbed, and smelling of soap, several

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turned to look at him because of the light in his eyes and the splendour of his countenance.

‘Well, you look beastly fit,’ snapped a neighbour. ‘Any one left you a legacy in the middle of the Bay?’

Georgie reached for the curry, with a seraphic grin. ‘I suppose it’s the gettin’ so near home, and all that. I do feel rather festive this mornin’. ‘Rolls a bit, doesn’t she?’

Mrs. Zuleika stayed in her cabin till the end of the voyage, when she left without bidding him farewell, and wept passionately on the dock-head for pure joy of meeting her children, who, she had often said, were so like their father.

Georgie headed for his own country, wild with delight of first long furlough after the lean seasons. Nothing was changed in that orderly life, from the coachman who met him at the station to the white peacock that stormed at the carriage from the stone wall above the shaven lawns. The house took toll of him with due regard to precedence—first the mother; then the father; then the housekeeper, who wept and praised God; then the butler; and so on down to the under-keeper, who had been dog-boy in Georgie’s youth, and called him ‘Master Georgie,’ and was reproved by the groom who had taught Georgie to ride.

‘Not a thing changed,’ he sighed contentedly, when the three of them sat down to dinner in the late sunlight, while the rabbits crept out upon the lawn below the cedars, and the big trout in the ponds by the home paddock rose for their evening meal.

‘Our changes are all over, dear,’ cooed the mother; ‘and now I am getting used to your size and your tan (you’re very brown, Georgie), I see you haven’t changed in the least. You’re exactly like the pater.’

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The father beamed on this man after his own heart,—‘Youngest major in the army, and should have had the V. C., sir,’—and the butler listened with his professional mask off when Master Georgie spoke of war as it is waged to-day, and his father cross-questioned.

They went out on the terrace to smoke among the roses, and the shadow of the old house lay long across the wonderful English foliage, which is the only living green in the world.

‘Perfect! By Jove, it’s perfect!’ Georgie was looking at the round-bosomed woods beyond the home paddock, where the white pheasant-boxes were ranged; and the golden air was full of a hundred sacred scents and sounds. Georgie felt his father’s arm tighten in his.

‘It’s not half bad—but “*hodie mihi, cras tibi*,” isn’t it? I suppose you’ll be turning up some fine day with a girl under your arm, if you haven’t one now, eh?’

‘You can make your mind easy, sir. I haven’t one.’

‘Not in all these years?’ said the mother.

‘I hadn’t time, mummy. They keep a man pretty busy, these days, in the service, and most of our mess are unmarried, too.’

‘But you must have met hundreds in society—at balls, and so on?’

‘I’m like the Tenth, mummy: I don’t dance.’

‘Don’t dance! What have you been doing with yourself, then—backing other men’s bills?’ said the father.

‘Oh yes; I’ve done a little of that too; but you see, as things are now, a man has all his work cut out for him to keep abreast of his profession, and my days were always too full to let me lark about half the night.’

‘Hmm!’—suspiciously.

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‘It’s never too late to learn. We ought to give some kind of house-warming for the people about, now you’ve come back. Unless you want to go straight up to town, dear?’

‘No. I don’t want anything better than this. Let’s sit still and enjoy ourselves. I suppose there will be something for me to ride if I look for it?’

‘Seeing I’ve been kept down to the old brown pair for the last six weeks because all the others were being got ready for Master Georgie, I should say there might be,’ the father chuckled. ‘They’re reminding me in a hundred ways that I must take the second place now.’

‘Brutes!’

‘The pater doesn’t mean it, dear; but every one has been trying to make your home-coming a success; and you do like it, don’t you?’

‘Perfect! Perfect! There’s no place like England—when you’ve done your work.’

‘That’s the proper way to look at it, my son.’

And so up and down the flagged walk till their shadows grew long in the moonlight, and the mother went indoors and played such songs as a small boy once clamoured for, and the squat silver candlesticks were brought in, and Georgie climbed to the two rooms in the west wing that had been his nursery and his play-room in the beginning. Then who should come to tuck him up for the night but the mother? And she sat down on the bed, and they talked for a long hour, as mother and son should, if there is to be any future for our Empire. With a simple woman’s deep guile she asked questions and suggested answers that should have waked some sign in the face on the pillow, but there was neither quiver of eyelid nor quickening of breath, neither eva-

sion nor delay in reply. So she blessed him and kissed him on the mouth, which is not always a mother's property, and said something to her husband later, at which he laughed profane and incredulous laughs.

All the establishment waited on Georgie next morning, from the tallest six-year-old, 'with a mouth like a kid glove, Master Georgie,' to the under-keeper strolling carelessly along the horizon, Georgie's pet rod in his hand, and 'There's a four-pounder risin' below the lasher. You don't 'ave 'em in Injia, Mast—Major Georgie.' It was all beautiful beyond telling, even though the mother insisted on taking him out in the landau (the leather had the hot Sunday smell of his youth), and showing him off to her friends at all the houses for six miles round; and the pater bore him up to town and a lunch at the club, where he introduced him, quite carelessly, to not less than thirty ancient warriors whose sons were not the youngest majors in the army, and had not the D. S. O. After that, it was Georgie's turn; and remembering his friends, he filled up the house with that kind of officer who lived in cheap lodgings at Southsea or Montpelier Square, Brompton—good men all, but not well off. The mother perceived that they needed girls to play with; and as there was no scarcity of girls, the house hummed like a dovecote in spring. They tore up the place for amateur theatricals; they disappeared in the gardens when they ought to have been rehearsing; they swept off every available horse and vehicle, especially the governess-cart and the fat pony; they fell into the trout-pond; they picnicked and they tennised; and they sat on gates in the twilight, two by two, and Georgie found that he was not in the least necessary to their entertainment.

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‘My word!’ said he, when he had seen the last of their dear backs. ‘They told me they’ve enjoyed ’emselves, but they haven’t done half the things they said they would.’

‘I know they’ve enjoyed themselves—immensely,’ said the mother. ‘You’re a public benefactor, dear.’

‘Now we can be quiet again, can’t we?’

‘Oh, quite. I’ve a very dear friend of mine that I want you to know. She couldn’t come with the house so full, because she’s an invalid, and she was away when you first came. She’s a Mrs. Lacy.’

‘Lacy! I don’t remember the name about here.’

‘No; they came after you went to India—from Oxford. Her husband died there, and she lost some money, I believe. They bought The Firs on the Bassett Road. She’s a very sweet woman, and we’re very fond of them both.’

‘She’s a widow, didn’t you say?’

‘She has a daughter. Surely I said so, dear?’

‘Does she fall into trout-ponds, and gas and giggle, and “Oh, Majah Cottah!” and all that sort of thing?’

‘No, indeed. She’s a very quiet girl, and very musical. She always came over here with her music-books—composing, you know; and she generally works all day, so you won’t—’

‘Talking about Miriam?’ said the pater, coming up. The mother edged toward him within elbow reach. There was no finesse about Georgie’s father. ‘Oh, Miriam’s a dear girl. Plays beautifully. Rides beautifully, too. She’s a regular pet of the household. Used to call me—’ The elbow went home, and ignorant, but obedient always, the pater shut himself off.

‘What used she to call you, sir?’

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‘All sorts of pet names. I’m very fond of Miriam.’

‘Sounds Jewish—Miriam.’

‘Jew! You’ll be calling yourself a Jew next. She’s one of the Herefordshire Lacys. When her aunt dies—’ Again the elbow.

‘Oh, you won’t see anything of her, Georgie. She’s busy with her music or her mother all day. Besides, you’re going up to town to-morrow, aren’t you? I thought you said something about an Institute meeting?’ The mother spoke.

‘Going up to town now? What nonsense!’ Once more the pater was silenced.

‘I had some idea of it, but I’m not quite sure,’ said the son of the house. Why did the mother try to get him away because a musical girl and her invalid parent were expected? He did not approve of unknown females calling his father pet names. He would observe these pushing persons who had been only seven years in the county.

All of which the delighted mother read in his countenance, herself keeping an air of sweet disinterestedness.

‘They’ll be here this evening for dinner. I’m sending the carriage over for them, and they won’t stay more than a week.’

‘Perhaps I shall go up to town. I don’t quite know yet.’ George moved away irresolutely. There was a lecture at the United Services Institute on the supply of ammunition in the field, and the one man whose theories most irritated Major Cottar would deliver it. A heated discussion was sure to follow, and perhaps he might find himself moved to speak. He took his rod that afternoon and went down to thrash it out among the trout.

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'Good sport, dear!' said the mother, from the terrace.

'Fraid it won't be, mummy. All those men from town, and the girls particularly, have put every trout off his feed for weeks. There isn't one of 'em that cares for fishin'—really. Fancy stampin' and shoutin' on the bank, and tellin' every fish for half a mile exactly what you're goin' to do, and then chuckin' a brute of a fly at him! By Jove, it would scare me if I was a trout!'

But things were not as bad as he had expected. The black gnat was on the water, and the water was strictly preserved. A three-quarter-pounder at the second cast set him for the campaign, and he worked down-stream, crouching behind the reed and meadow-sweet; creeping between a hornbeam hedge and a foot-wide strip of bank, where he could see the trout, but where they could not distinguish him from the background; lying on his stomach to switch the blue-upright sidewise through the checkered shadows of a gravelly ripple under over-arching trees. But he had known every inch of the water since he was four feet high. The aged and astute between sunk roots, with the large and fat that lay in the frothy scum below some strong rush of water, sucking lazily as carp, came to trouble in their turn, at the hand that imitated so delicately the flicker and wimple of an egg-dropping fly. Consequently, Georgie found himself five miles from home when he ought to have been dressing for dinner. The housekeeper had taken good care that her boy should not go empty; and before he changed to the white moth he sat down to excellent claret with sandwiches of potted egg and things that adoring women make and men never notice. Then back, to surprise the otter grubbing for fresh-water mussels, the rabbits on the edge of the beechwoods

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foraging in the clover, and the policeman-like white owl stooping to the little field-mice, till the moon was strong, and he took his rod apart, and went home through well-remembered gaps in the hedges. He fetched a compass round the house, for, though he might have broken every law of the establishment every hour, the law of his boyhood was unbreakable: after fishing you went in by the south garden back-door, cleaned up in the outer scullery, and did not present yourself to your elders and your betters till you had washed and changed.

'Half-past ten, by Jove! Well, we'll make the sport an excuse. They wouldn't want to see me the first evening, at any rate. 'Gone to bed, probably.' He skirted by the open French windows of the drawing-room. 'No, they haven't. They look very comfy in there.'

He could see his father in his own particular chair, the mother in hers, and the back of a girl at the piano by the big potpourri-jar. The garden showed half divine in the moonlight, and he turned down through the roses to finish his pipe.

A prelude ended, and there floated out a voice of the kind that in his childhood he used to call 'creamy'—a full, true contralto; and this is the song that he heard, every syllable of it:

'Over the edge of the purple Down,
Where the single lamplight gleams,
Know ye the road to the Merciful Town
That is hard by the Sea of Dreams—
Where the poor may lay their wrongs away,
And the sick may forget to weep?
But we—pity us! Oh, pity us!—
We wakeful; ah, pity us!—

THE BRUSHWOOD BOY

We must go back with Policeman Day—
Back from the City of Sleep!

‘Weary they turn from the scroll and crown,
Fetter and prayer and plough—
They that go up to the Merciful Town,
For her gates are closing now.
It is their right in the Baths of Night
Body and soul to steep:
But we—pity us! ah, pity us!—
We wakeful; oh, pity us!—
We must go back with Policeman Day—
Back from the City of Sleep!

‘Over the edge of the purple Down,
Ere the tender dreams begin,
Look—we may look—at the Merciful Town,
But we may not enter in!
Outcasts all, from her guarded wall
Back to our watch we creep:
We—pity us! ah, pity us!—
We wakeful; oh, pity us!—
We that go back with Policeman Day—
Back from the City of Sleep!’

At the last echo he was aware that his mouth was dry and unknown pulses were beating in the roof of it. The housekeeper, who would have it that he must have fallen in and caught a chill, was waiting to advise him on the stairs, and, since he neither saw nor answered her, carried a wild tale abroad that brought his mother knocking at the door.

‘Anything happened, dear? Harper said she thought you weren’t—’

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‘No; it’s nothing. I’m all right, mummy. Please don’t bother.’

He did not recognise his own voice, but that was a small matter beside what he was considering. Obviously, most obviously, the whole coincidence was crazy lunacy. He proved it to the satisfaction of Major George Cottar, who was going up to town to-morrow to hear a lecture on the supply of ammunition in the field; and having so proved it, the soul and brain and heart and body of Georgie cried joyously: ‘That’s the Lily Lock girl—the Lost Continent girl—the Thirty-Mile-Ride girl—the Brushwood girl! I know her!’

He waked, stiff and cramped in his chair, to reconsider the situation by sunlight, when it did not appear normal. But a man must eat, and he went to breakfast, his heart between his teeth, holding himself severely in hand.

‘Late, as usual,’ said the mother. ‘My boy, Miriam.’

A tall girl in black raised her eyes to his, and Georgie’s life training deserted him—just as soon as he realised that she did not know. He stared coolly and critically. There was the abundant black hair, growing in a widow’s peak, turned back from the forehead, with that peculiar ripple over the right ear; there were the gray eyes set a little close together; the short upper lip, resolute chin, and the known poise of the head. There was also the small, well-cut mouth that had kissed him.

‘Georgie—dear!’ said the mother, amazedly, for Miriam was flushing under the stare.

‘I—I beg your pardon!’ he gulped. ‘I don’t know whether the mother has told you, but I’m rather an idiot at times, specially before I’ve had my breakfast. It’s—it’s a family failing.’ He turned to explore among

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the hot-water dishes on the sideboard, rejoicing that she did not know—she did not know.

His conversation for the rest of the meal was mildly insane, though the mother thought she had never seen her boy look half so handsome. How could any girl, least of all one of Miriam's discernment, forbear to fall down and worship? But deeply Miriam was displeased. She had never been stared at in that fashion before, and promptly retired into her shell when Georgie announced that he had changed his mind about going to town, and would stay to play with Miss Lacy if she had nothing better to do.

'Oh, but don't let me throw you out. I'm at work. I've things to do all the morning.'

'What possessed Georgie to behave so oddly?' the mother sighed to herself. 'Miriam's a bundle of feelings—like her mother.'

'You compose, don't you? Must be a fine thing to be able to do that. [*Pig—oh, pig!* thought Miriam.] I think I heard you singin' when I came in last night after fishin'. All about a Sea of Dreams, wasn't it? [*Miriam shuddered to the core of the soul that afflicted her.*] Awfully pretty song. How d'you think of such things?'

'You only composed the music, dear, didn't you?'

'The words too, mummy. I'm sure of it,' said Georgie, with a sparkling eye. No; she did not know.

'Yeth; I wrote the words too.' Miriam spoke slowly, for she knew she lisped when she was nervous.

'Now how could you tell, Georgie?' said the mother, as delighted as though the youngest major in the army were ten years old, showing off before company.

'I was sure of it, somehow. Oh, there are heaps of things about me, mummy, that you don't understand.'

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'Looks as if it were goin' to be a hot day—for England. Would you care for a ride this afternoon, Miss Lacy? We can start out after tea, if you'd like it.'

Miriam could not in decency refuse, but any woman might see she was not filled with delight.

'That will be very nice, if you take the Bassett Road. It will save me sending Martin down to the village,' said the mother, filling in gaps.

Like all good managers, the mother had her one weakness—a mania for little strategies that should economise horses and vehicles. Her men-folk complained that she turned them into common carriers, and there was a legend in the family that she had once said to the pater on the morning of a meet: 'If you should kill near Bassett, dear, and if it isn't too late, would you mind just popping over and matching me this?'

'I knew that was coming. You'd never miss a chance, mother. If it's fish or a trunk, I won't.' Georgie laughed.

'It's only a duck. They can do it up very neatly at Mallett's,' said the mother simply. 'You won't mind, will you? We'll have a scratch dinner at nine, because it's so hot.'

The long summer day dragged itself out for centuries; but at last there was tea on the lawn, and Miriam appeared.

She was in the saddle before he could offer to help, with the clean spring of the child who mounted the pony for the Thirty-Mile-Ride. The day held mercilessly, though Georgie got down thrice to look for imaginary stones in Rufus's foot. One cannot say even simple things in broad light, and this that Georgie meditated was not simple. So he spoke seldom, and Miriam was

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divided between relief and scorn. It annoyed her that the great hulking thing should know she had written the words of the over-night song; for though a maiden may sing her most secret fancies aloud, she does not care to have them trampled over by the male Philistine. They rode into the little red-brick street of Bassett, and Georgie made untold fuss over the disposition of that duck. It must go in just such a package, and be fastened to the saddle in just such a manner, though eight o'clock had passed and they were miles from dinner.

‘We must be quick!’ said Miriam, bored and angry.

‘There’s no great hurry; but we can cut over Dow-head Down, and let ’em out on the grass. That will save us half an hour.’

The horses capered on the short, sweet-smelling turf, and the delaying shadows gathered in the valley as they cantered over the great dun down that overhangs Bassett and the Western coaching-road. Insensibly the pace quickened without thought of mole-hills; Rufus, gentleman that he was, waiting on Miriam’s Dandy till they should have cleared the rise. Then down the two-mile slope they raced together, the wind whistling in their ears, to the steady throb of eight hoofs and the light click-click of the shifting bits.

‘Oh, that was glorious!’ Miriam cried, reining in. ‘Dandy and I are old friends, but I don’t think we’ve ever gone better together.’

‘No; but you’ve gone quicker, once or twice.’

‘Really? When?’

Georgie moistened his lips. ‘Don’t you remember the Thirty-Mile-Ride—with me—when “They” were after us—on the beach road, with the sea to the left—going toward the lamp-post on the Downs?’

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The girl gasped. 'What—what do you mean?' she said hysterically.

'The Thirty-Mile-Ride, and—and all the rest of it.'

'You mean—? I didn't sing anything about the Thirty-Mile-Ride. I know I didn't. I have never told a living soul.'

'You told about Policeman Day, and the lamp at the top of the downs, and the City of Sleep. It all joins on, you know—it's the same country—and it was easy enough to see where you had been.'

'Good God!—It joins on—of course it does; but—I have been—you have been— Oh, let's walk, please, or I shall fall off!'

Georgie ranged alongside, and laid a hand that shook below her bridle-hand, pulling Dandy into a walk. Miriam was sobbing as he had seen a man sob under the touch of the bullet.

'It's all right—it's all right,' he whispered feebly. 'Only—only it's true, you know.'

'True! Am I mad?'

'Not unless I'm mad as well. Do try to think a minute quietly. How could any one conceivably know anything about the Thirty-Mile-Ride having anything to do with you, unless he had been there?'

'But where? But where? Tell me!'

'There—wherever it may be. In our country, I suppose. Do you remember the first time you rode it—the Thirty-Mile-Ride, I mean? You must.'

'It was all dreams—all dreams!'

'Yes, but tell, please; because I know.'

'Let me think. I—we were on no account to make any noise—on no account to make any noise.' She was

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staring between Dandy's ears with eyes that did not see, and a suffocating heart.

'Because "It" was dying in the big house?' Georgie went on, reining in again.

'There was a garden with green-and-gilt railings—all hot. Do you remember?'

'I ought to. I was sitting on the other side of the bed before "It" coughed and "They" came in.'

'You!'—the deep voice was unnaturally full and strong, and the girl's wide-opened eyes burned in the dusk as she stared him through and through. 'Then you're the Boy—my Brushwood Boy, and I've known you all my life!'

She fell forward on Dandy's neck. Georgie forced himself out of the weakness that was overmastering his limbs, and slid an arm round her waist. The head dropped on his shoulder, and he found himself with parched lips saying things that up till then he believed existed only in printed works of fiction. Mercifully the horses were quiet. She made no attempt to draw herself away when she recovered, but lay still, whispering, 'Of course you're the Boy, and I didn't know—I didn't know.'

'I knew last night; and when I saw you at breakfast—'

'Oh, that was why! I wondered at the time. You would, of course.'

'I couldn't speak before this. Keep your head where it is, dear. It's all right now—all right now, isn't it?'

'But how was it I didn't know—after all these years and years? I remember—oh, what lots of things I remember!'

'Tell me some. I'll look after the horses.'

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'I remember waiting for you when the steamer came in. Do you?'

'At the Lily Lock, beyond Hong-Kong and Java?'

'Do you call it that, too?'

'You told me it was when I was lost in the continent. That was you that showed me the way through the mountains?'

'When the islands slid? It must have been, because you're the only one I remember. All the others were "Them."'

'Awful brutes they were, too.'

'Yes, I remember showing you the Thirty-Mile-Ride the first time. You ride just as you used to—then. You are you!'

'That's odd. I thought that of you this afternoon. Isn't it wonderful?'

'What does it all mean? Why should you and I of the millions of people in the world have this—this thing between us? What does it mean? I'm frightened.'

'This!' said Georgie. The horses quickened their pace. They thought they had heard an order. 'Perhaps when we die we may find out more, but it means this now.'

There was no answer. What could she say? As the world went, they had known each other rather less than eight and a half hours, but the matter was one that did not concern the world. There was a very long silence, while the breath in their nostrils drew cold and sharp as it might have been fumes of ether.

'That's the second,' Georgie whispered. 'You remember, don't you?'

'It's not!'—furiously. 'It's not!'

'On the downs the other night—months ago. You

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were just as you are now, and we went over the country for miles and miles.'

'It was all empty, too. They had gone away. Nobody frightened us. I wonder why, Boy?'

'Oh, if you remember that, you must remember the rest. Confess!'

'I remember lots of things, but I know I didn't. I never have—till just now.'

'You did, dear.'

'I know I didn't, because—oh, it's no use keeping anything back!—because I truthfully meant to.'

'And truthfully did.'

'No; meant to; but some one else came by.'

'There wasn't any one else. There never has been.'

'There was—there always is. It was another woman—out there on the sea. I saw her. It was the 26th of May. I've got it written down somewhere.'

'Oh, you've kept a record of your dreams, too? That's odd about the other woman, because I happened to be on the sea just then.'

'I was right. How do I know what you've done—when you were awake. And I thought it was only you!'

'You never were more wrong in your life. What a little temper you've got! Listen to me a minute, dear.' And Georgie, though he knew it not, committed black perjury. 'It—it isn't the kind of thing one says to any one, because they'd laugh; but on my word and honour, darling, I've never been kissed by a living soul outside my own people in all my life. Don't laugh, dear. I wouldn't tell any one but you, but it's the solemn truth.'

'I knew! You are you. Oh, I knew you'd come some day; but I didn't know you were you in the least till you spoke.'

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‘Then give me another.’

‘And you never cared or looked anywhere? Why, all the round world must have loved you from the very minute they saw you, Boy.’

‘They kept it to themselves if they did. No; I never cared.’

‘And we shall be late for dinner—horribly late. Oh, how can I look at you in the light before your mother—and mine!’

‘We’ll play you’re Miss Lacy till the proper time comes. What’s the shortest limit for people to get engaged? S’pose we have got to go through all the fuss of an engagement, haven’t we?’

‘Oh, I don’t want to talk about that. It’s so commonplace. I’ve thought of something that you don’t know. I’m sure of it. What’s my name?’

‘Miri—no, it isn’t, by Jove! Wait half a second, and it’ll come back to me. You aren’t—you can’t? Why, those old tales—before I went to school! I’ve never thought of ’em from that day to this. Are you the original, only Annie-an-louise?’

‘It was what you always called me ever since the beginning. Oh! We’ve turned into the avenue, and we must be an hour late.’

‘What does it matter? The chain goes as far back as those days? It must, of course—of course it must. I’ve got to ride round with this pestilent old bird—confound him!’

‘“Ha! ha! said the duck, laughing.” Do you remember that?’

‘Yes, I do—flower-pots on my feet, and all. We’ve been together all this while; and I’ve got to say good-bye to you till dinner. ’Sure I’ll see you at dinner—

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time? 'Sure you won't sneak up to your room, darling, and leave me all the evening? Good-bye, dear—good-bye.'

'Good-bye, Boy, good-bye. Mind the arch! Don't let Rufus bolt into his stable. Good-bye. Yes, I'll come down to dinner; but—what shall I do when I see you in the light!'

THE END

MANY INVENTIONS

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TO THE TRUE ROMANCE

THY face is far from this our war,
Our call and counter-cry,
I shall not find Thee quick and kind,
Nor know Thee till I die.
Enough for me in dreams to see
And touch Thy garments' hem:
Thy feet have trod so near to God
I may not follow them.

Through wantonness if men profess
They weary of Thy parts,
E'en let them die at blasphemy
And perish with their arts;
But we that love, but we that prove
Thine excellence august,
While we adore discover more
Thee perfect, wise, and just.

Since spoken word Man's spirit stirred
Beyond his belly-need,
What is is Thine of fair design
In thought and craft and deed;
Each stroke aright of toil and fight,
That was and that shall be,
And hope too high wherefore we die,
Has birth and worth in Thee.

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Who holds by Thee hath Heaven in fee
To gild his dross thereby,
And knowledge sure that he endure
A child until he die—
For to make plain that man's disdain
Is but new Beauty's birth—
For to possess in cheerfulness
The joy of all the earth.

As Thou didst teach all lovers speech
And Life her mystery,
So shalt Thou rule by every school
Till love and longing die,
Who wast or yet the lights were set,
A whisper in the Void,
Who shalt be sung through planets young
When this is clean destroyed.

Beyond the bounds our staring rounds,
Across the pressing dark,
The children wise of outer skies
Look hitherward and mark
A light that shifts, a glare that drifts,
Rekindling thus and thus,
Not all forlorn, for Thou hast borne
Strange tales to them of us.

Time hath no tide but must abide
The servant of Thy will;
Tide hath no time, for to Thy rhyme
The ranging stars stand still—
Regent of spheres that lock our fears
Our hopes invisible,
Oh 'twas certes at Thy decrees
We fashioned Heaven and Hell!

TO THE TRUE ROMANCE

Pure Wisdom hath no certain path
That lacks thy morning-eyne,
And captains bold by Thee controlled
Most like to Gods design;
Thou art the Voice to kingly boys
To lift them through the fight,
And Comfortress of Unsuccess,
To give the dead good-night—

A veil to draw 'twixt God His Law
And Man's infirmity,
A shadow kind to dumb and blind
The shambles where we die;
A sum to trick th' arithmetic
Too base of leaguings odds,
The spur of trust, the curb of lust,
Thou handmaid of the Gods!

Oh Charity, all patiently
Abiding wrack and scaith!
Oh Faith, that meets ten thousand cheats
Yet drops no jot of faith!
Devil and brute Thou dost transmute
To higher, lordlier show,
Who art in sooth that utter Truth
The careless angels know!

Thy face is far from this our war,
Our call and counter-cry,
I may not find Thee quick and kind,
Nor know Thee till I die.

Yet may I look with heart unshook
On blow brought home or missed—

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Yet may I hear with equal ear
The clarions down the List;
Yet set my lance above mischance
And ride the barriere—
Oh, hit or miss, how little 'tis,
My lady is not there!

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THE DISTURBER OF TRAFFIC

(1891)

From the wheel and the drift of Things
Deliver us, good Lord;
And we will face the wrath of Kings,
The faggot, and the sword.

Lay not Thy toil before our eyes,
Nor vex us with Thy wars,
Lest we should feel the straining skies
O'ertrod by trampling stars.

A veil 'twixt us and Thee, dread Lord,
A veil 'twixt us and Thee:
Lest we should hear too clear, too clear,
And unto madness see!

Miriam Cohen.

THE Brothers of the Trinity order that none unconnected with their service shall be found in or on one of their Lights during the hours of darkness; but their servants can be made to think otherwise. If you are fair-spoken and take an interest in their duties, they will allow you to sit with them through the long night and help to scare the ships into mid-channel.

Of the English south-coast Lights, that of St. Cecilia-under-the-Cliff is the most powerful, for it guards a very

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foggy coast. When the sea-mist veils all, St. Cecilia turns a hooded head to the sea and sings a song of two words once every minute. From the land that song resembles the bellowing of a brazen bull; but off-shore they understand, and the steamers grunt gratefully in answer.

Fenwick, who was on duty one night, lent me a pair of black glass spectacles, without which no man can look at the Light unblinded, and busied himself in last touches to the lenses before twilight fell. The width of the English Channel beneath us lay as smooth and as many-coloured as the inside of an oyster shell. A little Sunderland cargo-boat had made her signal to Lloyd's Agency, half a mile up the coast, and was lumbering down to the sunset, her wake lying white behind her. One star came out over the cliffs, the waters turned to lead colour, and St. Cecilia's Light shot out across the sea in eight long pencils that wheeled slowly from right to left, melted into one beam of solid light laid down directly in front of the tower, dissolved again into eight, and passed away. The light-frame of the thousand lenses circled on its rollers, and the compressed-air engine that drove it hummed like a blue-bottle under a glass. The hand of the indicator on the wall pulsed from mark to mark. Eight pulse-beats timed one half-revolution of the Light; neither more nor less.

Fenwick checked the first few revolutions carefully; opened the engine's feed-pipe a trifle, looked at the racing governor, and again at the indicator, and said: 'She'll do for the next few hours. We've just sent our regular engine to London, and this spare one's not by any manner so accurate.'

'And what would happen if the compressed air gave out?' I asked.

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‘We’d have to turn the flash by hand, keeping an eye on the indicator. There’s a regular crank for that. But it hasn’t happened yet. We’ll need all our compressed air to-night.’

‘Why?’ said I. I had been watching him for not more than a minute.

‘Look,’ he answered, and I saw that the dead sea-mist had risen out of the lifeless sea and wrapped us while my back had been turned. The pencils of the Light marched staggeringly across tilted floors of white cloud. From the balcony round the light-room the white walls of the lighthouse ran down into swirling, smoking space. The noise of the tide coming in very lazily over the rocks was choked down to a thick drawl.

‘That’s the way our sea-fogs come,’ said Fenwick, with an air of ownership. ‘Hark, now, to that little fool calling out ’fore he’s hurt.’

Something in the mist was bleating like an indignant calf; it might have been half a mile or half a hundred miles away.

‘Does he suppose we’ve gone to bed?’ continued Fenwick. ‘You’ll hear us talk to him in a minute. He knows puffickly where he is, and he’s carrying on to be told like if he was insured.’

‘Who is “he”?’

‘That Sunderland boat, o’ course. Ah!’

I could hear a steam-engine hiss down below in the mist where the dynamos that fed the Light were clacking together. Then there came a roar that split the fog and shook the lighthouse.

‘Git-toot!’ blared the fog-horn of St. Cecilia. The bleating ceased.

‘Little fool!’ Fenwick repeated. Then, listening:

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‘Blest if that aren’t another of them! Well, well, they always say that a fog do draw the ships of the sea together. They’ll be calling all night, and so’ll the siren. We’re expecting some tea-ships up-Channel. . . . If you put my coat on that chair, you’ll feel more so-fash, sir.’

It is no pleasant thing to thrust your company upon a man for the night. I looked at Fenwick, and Fenwick looked at me; each gauging the other’s capacities for boring and being bored. Fenwick was an old, clean-shaven, gray-haired man who had followed the sea for thirty years, and knew nothing of the land except the lighthouse in which he served. He fenced cautiously to find out the little that I knew and talked down to my level, till it came out that I had met a captain in the merchant service who had once commanded a ship in which Fenwick’s son had served; and further, that I had seen some places that Fenwick had touched at. He began with a dissertation on pilotage in the Hugli. I had been privileged to know a Hugli pilot intimately. Fenwick had only seen the imposing and masterful breed from a ship’s chains, and his intercourse had been cut down to ‘Quarter less five,’ and remarks of a strictly business-like nature. Hereupon he ceased to talk down to me, and became so amazingly technical that I was forced to beg him to explain every other sentence. This set him fully at his ease; and then we spoke as men together, each too interested to think of anything except the subject in hand. And that subject was wrecks, and voyages, and old-time trading, and ships cast away in desolate seas, steamers we both had known, their merits and demerits, lading, Lloyd’s, and, above all, Lights. The talk always came back to Lights: Lights of the

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Channel; Lights on forgotten islands, and men forgotten on them; Light-ships—two months' duty and one month's leave—tossing on kinked cables in ever troubled tide-ways; and Lights that men had seen where never light-house was marked on the charts.

Omitting all those stories, and omitting also the wonderful ways by which he arrived at them, I tell here, from Fenwick's mouth, one that was not the least amazing. It was delivered in pieces between the roller-skate rattle of the revolving lenses, the bellowing of the fog-horn below, the answering calls from the sea, and the sharp tap of reckless night-birds that flung themselves at the glasses. It concerned a man called Dowse, once an intimate friend of Fenwick, now a waterman at Portsmouth, believing that the guilt of blood is on his head, and finding no rest either at Portsmouth or Gosport Hard.

. . . 'And if anybody was to come to you and say, "I know the Javva currents," don't you listen to him; for those currents is never yet known to mortal man. Sometimes they're here, sometimes they're there, but they never runs less than five knots an hour through and among those islands of the Eastern Archipelagus. There's reverse currents in the Gulf of Boni—and that's up north in Celebes—which no man can explain; and through all those Javva passages from the Bali Narrows, Dutch Gut, and Ombay, which I take it is the safest, they chop and they change, and they banks the tides fust on one shore and then on another, till your ship's tore in two. I've come through the Bali Narrows, stern first, in the heart o' the southeast monsoon, with sou'-sou'-west wind blowing atop of the northerly flood, and our skipper

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said he wouldn't do it again, not for all Jamrach's. You've heard o' Jamrach's, sir?'

'Yes; and was Dowse stationed in the Bali Narrows?' I said.

'No; he was not at Bali, but much more east o' them passages, and that's Flores Strait, at the east end o' Flores. It's all on the way south to Australia when you're running through that Eastern Archipelagus. Sometimes you go through Bali Narrows if you're full-powered, and sometimes through Flores Strait, so as to stand south at once, and fetch round Timor, keeping well clear o' the Sahul Bank. Elseways, if you aren't full-powered, why it stands to reason you go round by the Ombay Passage, keeping careful to the north side. You understand that, sir?'

I was not full-powered, and judged it safer to keep to the north side—of Silence.

'And on Flores Strait, in the fairway between Adonare Island and the mainland, they put Dowse in charge of a screw-pile Light called the Wurlee Light. It's less than a mile across the head of Flores Strait. Then it opens out to ten or twelve mile for Solar Strait, and then it narrows again to a three-mile gut, with a topplin' flamin' volcano by it. That's old Loby Toby by Loby Toby Strait, and if you keep his Light and the Wurlee Light in a line you won't take much harm, not on the darkest night. That's what Dowse told me, and I can well believe him, knowing these seas myself; but you must ever be mindful of the currents. And there they put Dowse, since he was the only man that that Dutch Government which owns Flores could find that would go to Wurlee and tend a fixed Light. Mostly they uses Dutch and Italians; Englishmen being said to drink when alone.

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I never could rightly find out what made Dowse accept of that position, but accept he did, and used to sit for to watch the tigers come out of the forests to hunt for crabs and such like round about the lighthouse at low tide. The water was always warm in those parts, as I know well, and uncommon sticky, and it ran with the tides as thick and smooth as hogwash in a trough. There was another man along with Dowse in the Light, but he wasn't rightly a man. He was a Kling. No, nor yet a Kling he wasn't, but his skin was in little flakes and cracks all over, from living so much in the salt water as was his usual custom. His hands was all webby-foot, too. He was called, I remember Dowse saying now, an Orange-Lord, on account of his habits. You've heard of an Orange-Lord, sir?

'Orang-Laut?' I suggested.

'That's the name,' said Fenwick, smacking his knee. 'An Orang-Laut, of course, and his name was Challong; what they call a sea-gipsy. Dowse told me that that man, long hair and all, would go swimming up and down the straits just for something to do; running down on one tide and back again with the other, swimming side-stroke, and the tides going tremenjus strong. Elseways he'd be skipping about the beach along with the tigers at low tide, for he was most part a beast; or he'd sit in a little boat praying to old Loby Toby of an evening when the volcano was spitting red at the south end of the strait. Dowse told me that he wasn't a companionable man, like you and me might have been to Dowse.

'Now I can never rightly come at what it was that began to ail Dowse after he had been there a year or something less. He was saving of all his pay and tending to his Light, and now and again he'd have a fight with

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Challong and tip him off the Light into the sea. Then, he told me, his head began to feel streaky from looking at the tide so long. He said there was long streaks of white running inside it; like wall-paper that hadn't been properly pasted up, he said. The streaks, they would run with the tides, north and south, twice a day, according to them currents, and he'd lie down on the planking—it was a screw-pile Light—with his eye to a crack and watch the water streaking through the piles just so quiet as hogwash. He said the only comfort he got was at slack water. Then the streaks in his head went round and round like a sampan in a tide-rip; but that was heaven, he said, to the other kind of streaks—the straight ones that looked like arrows on a wind-chart, but much more regular, and that was the trouble of it. No more he couldn't ever keep his eyes off the tides that ran up and down so strong, but as soon as ever he looked at the high hills standing all along Flores Strait for rest and comfort, his eyes would be pulled down like to the nesty streaky water; and when they once got there he couldn't pull them away again till the tide changed. He told me all this himself, speaking just as though he was talking of somebody else.'

'Where did you meet him?' I asked.

'In Portsmouth harbour, a-cleaning the brasses of a Ryde boat, but I'd known him off and on through following the sea for many years. Yes, he spoke about himself very curious, and all as if he was in the next room laying there dead. Those streaks, they preyed upon his intellects, he said; and he made up his mind, every time that the Dutch gunboat that attends to the Lights in those parts come along, that he'd ask to be took off. But as soon as she did come something went click in his

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throat, and he was so took up with watching her masts, because they ran longways, in the contrary direction to his streaks, that he could never say a word until she was gone away and her masts was under sea again. Then, he said, he'd cry by the hour; and Challong swum round and round the Light, laughin' at him and splashin' water with his webby-foot hands. At last he took it into his pore sick head that the ships, and particularly the steamers that came by,—there wasn't many of them,—made the streaks, instead of the tides as was natural. He used to sit, he told me, cursing every boat that come along,—sometimes a junk, sometimes a Dutch brig, and now and again a steamer rounding Flores Head and poking about in the mouth of the strait. Or there'd come a boat from Australia running north past old Loby Toby hunting for a fair current, but never throwing out any papers that Challong might pick up for Dowse to read. Generally speaking, the steamers kept more westerly, but now and again they came looking for Timor and the west coast of Australia. Dowse used to shout to them to go round by the Ombay Passage, and not to come streaking past him making the water all streaky, but it wasn't likely they'd hear. He says to himself after a month, "I'll give them one more chance," he says. "If the next boat don't attend to my just representations,"—he says he remembers using those very words to Challong,—“I'll stop the fairway.”

‘The next boat was a Two-streak cargo-boat very anxious to make her northing. She waddled through under old Loby Toby at the south end of the strait, and she passed within a quarter of a mile of the Wurlee Light at the north end, in seventeen fathom o’ water, the tide against her. Dowse took the trouble to come out with

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Challong in a little prow that they had,—all bamboos and leakage,—and he lay in the fairway waving a palm branch, and, so he told me, wondering why and what for he was making this fool of himself. Up come the Two-streak boat, and Dowse shouts: “Don’t you come this way again, making my head all streaky! Go round by Ombay, and leave me alone.” Some one looks over the port bulwarks and shies a banana at Dowse, and that’s all. Dowse sits down in the bottom of the boat and cries fit to break his heart. Then he says, “Challong, what am I a-crying for?” and they fetches up by the Wurlee Light on the half-flood.

“Challong,” he says, “there’s too much traffic here, and that’s why the water’s so streaky as it is. It’s the junks and the brigs and the steamers that do it,” he says; and all the time he was speaking he was thinking, “Lord, Lord, what a crazy fool I am!” Challong said nothing, because he couldn’t speak a word of English except say “dam,” and he said that where you or me would say “yes.” Dowse lay down on the planking of the Light with his eye to the crack, and he saw the muddy water streaking below, and he never said a word till slack water, because the streaks kept him tongue-tied at such times. At slack water he says, “Challong, we must buoy this fairway for wrecks,” and he holds up his hands several times, showing that dozens of wrecks had come about in the fairway; and Challong says, “Dam.”

‘That very afternoon he and Challong rows to Wurlee, the village in the woods that the Light was named after, and buys canes,—stacks and stacks of canes, and coir rope thick and fine, all sorts,—and they sets to work making square floats by lashing of the canes together. Dowse said he took longer over those floats than might

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have been needed, because he rejoiced in the corners, they being square, and the streaks in his head all running longways. He lashed the canes together, criss-cross and thwartways,—any way but longways,—and they made up a dozen twelve-foot-square floats, like rafts. Then he stepped a twelve-foot bamboo or a bundle of canes in the centre, and to the head of that he lashed a big six-foot W letter, all made of canes, and painted the float dark green and the W white, as a wreck buoy should be painted. Between them two they makes a round dozen of these new kind of wreck-buoys, and it was a two months' job. There was no big traffic, owing to it being on the turn of the monsoon, but what there was Dowse cursed at, and the streaks in his head, they ran with the tides, as usual.

'Day after day, so soon as a buoy was ready, Challong would take it out, with a big rock that half sunk the prow and a bamboo grapnel, and drop it dead in the fairway. He did this day or night, and Dowse could see him of a clear night, when the sea brimed, climbing about the buoys with the sea-fire dripping off him. They was all put into place, twelve of them, in seventeen-fathom water; not in a straight line, on account of a well-known shoal there, but slantways, and two, one behind the other, mostly in the centre of the fairway. You must keep the centre of those Javva currents, for currents at the side is different, and in narrow water, before you can turn a spoke, you get your nose took round and rubbed upon the rocks and the woods. Dowse knew that just as well as any skipper. Likeways he knew that no skipper daren't run through uncharted wrecks in a six-knot current. He told me he used to lie outside the Light watching his buoys ducking and dipping so friendly with

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the tide; and the motion was comforting to him on account of its being different from the run of the streaks in his head.

‘Three weeks after he’d done his business up comes a steamer through Loby Toby Straits, thinking she’d run into Flores Sea before night. He saw her slow down; then she backed. Then one man and another come up on the bridge, and he could see there was a regular pow-wow, and the flood was driving her right on to Dowse’s wreck-buoys. After that she spun round and went back south, and Dowse nearly killed himself with laughing. But a few weeks after that a couple of junks came shouldering through from the north, arm in arm, like junks go. It takes a good deal to make a Chinaman understand danger. They junks set well in the current, and went down the fairway, right among the buoys, ten knots an hour, blowing horns and banging tin pots all the time. That made Dowse very angry; he having taken so much trouble to stop the fairway. No boats run Flores Straits by night, but it seemed to Dowse that if junks’d do that in the day, the Lord knew but what a steamer might trip over his buoys at night; and he sent Challong to run a coir rope between three of the buoys in the middle of the fairway, and he fixed naked lights of coir steeped in oil to that rope. The tides was the only things that moved in those seas, for the airs was dead still till they began to blow, and then they would blow your hair off. Challong tended those lights every night after the junks had been so impident,—four lights in about a quarter of a mile hung up in iron skillets on the rope; and when they was alight,—and coir burns well, very like a lamp wick,—the fairway seemed more madder than anything else in the world. First there was the

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Wurlee Light, then these four queer lights that couldn't be riding-lights, almost flush with the water, and behind them, twenty mile off, but the biggest light of all, there was the red top of old Loby Toby volcano. Dowse told me that he used to go out in the prow and look at his handiwork, and it made him scared, being like no lights that ever was fixed.

'By and by some more steamers came along, snorting and snifting at the buoys, but never going through, and Dowse says to himself: "Thank goodness I've taught them not to come streaking through my water. Ombay Passage is good enough for them and the like of them." But he didn't remember how quick that sort of news spreads among the shipping. Every steamer that fetched up by those buoys told another steamer and all the port officers concerned in those seas that there was something wrong with Flores Straits that hadn't been charted yet. It was block-buoyed for wrecks in the fairway, they said, and no sort of passage to use. Well, the Dutch, of course they didn't know anything about it. They thought our Admiralty Survey had been there, and they thought it very queer but neighbourly. You understand us English are always looking up marks and lighting sea-ways all the world over, never asking with your leave or by your leave, seeing that the sea concerns us more than any one else. So the news went to and back from Flores to Bali, and Bali to Probolinggo, where the railway is that runs to Batavia. All through them Javva seas everybody got the word to keep clear o' Flores Straits, and Dowse, he was left alone except for such steamers and small craft as didn't know. They'd come up and look at the straits like a bull over a gate, but those nodding wreck-buoys scared them away. By

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and by the Admiralty Survey ship—the “Britomarte” I think she was—lay in Macassar Roads off Fort Rotterdam, alongside of the “Amboina,” a dirty little Dutch gunboat that used to clean there; and the Dutch captain says to our captain, “What’s wrong with Flores Straits?” he says.

“Blowed if I know,” says our captain, who’d just come up from the Angelica Shoal.

“Then why did you go and buoy it?” says the Dutchman.

“Blowed if I have,” says our captain. “That’s your lookout.”

“Buoyed it is,” says the Dutch captain, “according to what they tell me; and a whole fleet of wreck-buoys, too.”

“Gummy!” says our captain. “It’s a dorg’s life at sea, any way. I must have a look at this. You come along after me as soon as you can”; and down he skipped that very night, round the heel of Celebes, three days’ steam to Flores Head, and he met a Two-streak liner, very angry, backing out of the head of the strait; and the merchant captain gave our Survey ship something of his mind for leaving wrecks uncharted in those narrow waters and wasting his company’s coal.

“It’s no fault o’ mine,” says our captain.

“I don’t care whose fault it is,” says the merchant captain, who had come aboard to speak to him just at dusk. “The fairway’s choked with wreck enough to knock a hole through a dock-gate. I saw their big ugly masts sticking up just under my forefoot. Lord ha’ mercy on us!” he says, spinning round. “The place is like Regent Street of a hot summer night.”

‘And so it was. They two looked at Flores Straits,

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and they saw lights one after the other stringing across the fairway. Dowse, he had seen the steamers hanging about there before dark, and he said to Challong: "We'll give 'em something to remember. Get all the skillets and iron pots you can and hang them up alongside o' the regular four lights. We must teach 'em to go round by the Ombay Passage, or they'll be streaking up our water again!" Challong took a header off the lighthouse, got aboard the little leaking prow, with his coir soaked in oil and all the skillets he could muster, and he began to show his lights, four regulation ones and half-a-dozen new lights hung on that rope which was a little above the water. Then he went to all the spare buoys with all his spare coir, and hung a skillet-flare on every pole that he could get at,—about seven poles. So you see, taking one with another, there was the Wurlee Light, four lights on the rope between the three centre fairway wreck-buoys that was hung out as a usual custom, six or eight extry ones that Challong had hung up on the same rope, and seven dancing flares that belonged to seven wreck-buoys,—eighteen or twenty lights in all crowded into a mile of seventeen-fathom water, where no tide'd ever let a wreck rest for three weeks, let alone ten or twelve wrecks, as the flares showed.

'The Admiralty captain, he saw the lights come out one after another, same as the merchant skipper did who was standing at his side, and he said:—

' "There's been an international cata-strophe here or elseways," and then he whistled. "I'm going to stand on and off all night till the Dutchman comes," he says.

' "I'm off," says the merchant skipper. "My owners don't wish for me to watch illuminations. That strait's choked with wreck, and I shouldn't wonder if a typhoon

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hadn't driven half the junks o' China there." With that he went away; but the Survey ship, she stayed all night at the head o' Flores Strait, and the men admired of the lights till the lights was burning out, and then they admired more than ever.

'A little bit before morning the Dutch gunboat come flustering up, and the two ships stood together watching the lights burn out and out, till there was nothing left 'cept Flores Straits, all green and wet, and a dozen wreck-buoys, and Wurlee Light.

'Dowse had slept very quiet that night, and got rid of his streaks by means of thinking of the angry steamers outside. Challong was busy, and didn't come back to his bunk till late. In the gray early morning Dowse looked out to sea, being, as he said, in torment, and saw all the navies of the world riding outside Flores Strait fairway in a half-moon, seven miles from wing to wing, most wonderful to behold. Those were the words he used to me time and again in telling the tale.

'Then, he says, he heard a gun fired with a most tremendous explosion, and all them great navies crumbled to little pieces of clouds, and there was only two ships remaining, and a man-o'-war's boat rowing to the Light, with the oars going sideways instead o' longways as the morning tides, ebb or flow, would continually run.

' "What the devil's wrong with this strait?" says a man in the boat as soon as they was in hailing distance. "Has the whole English Navy sunk here, or what?"

' "There's nothing wrong," says Dowse, sitting on the platform outside the Light, and keeping one eye very watchful on the streakiness of the tide, which he always hated, 'specially in the mornings. "You leave me alone and I'll leave you alone. Go round by the Om-

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bay Passage, and don't cut up my water. You're making it streaky." All the time he was saying that he kept on thinking to himself, "Now that's foolishness,—now that's nothing but foolishness"; and all the time he was holding tight to the edge of the platform in case the streakiness of the tide should carry him away.

'Somebody answers from the boat, very soft and quiet, "We're going round by Ombay in a minute, if you'll just come and speak to our captain and give him his bearings."

Dowse, he felt very highly flattered, and he slipped into the boat, not paying any attention to Challong. But Challong swum along to the ship after the boat. When Dowse was in the boat, he found, so he says, he couldn't speak to the sailors 'cept to call them "white mice with chains about their neck," and Lord knows he hadn't seen or thought o' white mice since he was a little bit of a boy with them in his hankerchief. So he kept himself quiet, and so they come to the Survey ship; and the man in the boat hails the quarter-deck with something that Dowse could not rightly understand, but there was one word he spelt out again and again,—m-a-d, mad,—and he heard some one behind him saying of it backwards. So he had two words,—m-a-d, mad, d-a-m, dam; and he put the two words together as he come on the quarter-deck, and he says to the captain very slowly, "I be damned if I am mad," but all the time his eye was held like by the coils of rope on the belaying pins, and he followed those ropes up and up with his eye till he was quite lost and comfortable among the rigging, which ran criss-cross, and slopeways, and up and down, and any way but straight along under his feet north and south. The deck-seams, they ran that way, and Dowse daresn't look at them. They was the same

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as the streaks of the water under the planking of the lighthouse.

‘Then he heard the captain talking to him very kind, and for the life of him he couldn’t tell why; and what he wanted to tell the captain was that Flores Strait was too streaky, like bacon, and the steamers only made it worse; but all he could do was to keep his eye very careful on the rigging and sing:—

“‘I saw a ship a-sailing,
A-sailing on the sea;
And oh, it was all lading
With pretty things for me!’”

Then he remembered that was foolishness, and he started off to say about the Ombay Passage, but all he said was: “The captain was a duck,—meaning no offence to you, sir,—but there was something on his back that I’ve forgotten.

“‘And when the ship began to move
The captain says, ‘Quack-quack!’”

‘He notices the captain turns very red and angry, and he says to himself, “My foolish tongue’s run away with me again. I’ll go forward”; and he went forward, and caught the reflection of himself in the binnacle brasses; and he saw that he was standing there and talking mother-naked in front of all them sailors, and he ran into the fo’c’s’le howling most grievous. He must ha’ gone naked for weeks on the Light, and Challong o’ course never noticed it. Challong was swimmin’ round and round the ship, sayin’ “dam” for to please the men and to be took aboard, because he didn’t know any better.

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‘Dowse didn’t tell what happened after this, but seemingly our Survey ship lowered two boats and went over to Dowse’s buoys. They took one sounding, and then finding it was all correct they cut the buoys that Dowse and Challong had made, and let the tide carry ’em out through the Loby Toby end of the strait; and the Dutch gunboat, she sent two men ashore to take care o’ the Wurlee Light, and the “Britomarte,” she went away with Dowse, leaving Challong to try to follow them, a-calling “dam—dam” all among the wake of the screw, and half heaving himself out of water and joining his webby-foot hands together. He dropped astern in five minutes, and I suppose he went back to the Wurlee Light. You can’t drown an Orange-Lord, not even in Flores Strait on flood-tide.

‘Dowse come across me when he came to England with the Survey ship, after being more than six months in her, and cured of his streaks by working hard and not looking over the side more than he could help. He told me what I’ve told you, sir, and he was very much ashamed of himself; but the trouble on his mind was to know whether he hadn’t sent something or other to the bottom with his buoyings and his lightings and such like. He put it to me many times, and each time more and more sure he was that something had happened in the straits because of him. I think that distructed him, because I found him up at Fratton one day, in a red jersey, a-praying before the Salvation Army, which had produced him in their papers as a Reformed Pirate. They knew from his mouth that he had committed devil on the deep waters,—that was what he told them,—and piracy, which no one does now except Chinesees, was all they knew of. I says to him: “Dowse, don’t be a fool. Take off that

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jersey and come along with me.” He says: “Fenwick, I’m a-saving of my soul; for I do believe that I have killed more men in Flores Strait than Trafalgar.” I says: “A man that thought he’d seen all the navies of the earth standing round in a ring to watch his foolish false wreck-buoys” (those was my very words I used) “ain’t fit to have a soul, and if he did he couldn’t kill a louse with it. John Dowse, you was mad then, but you are a damn sight madder now. Take off that there jersey!”

‘He took it off and come along with me, but he never got rid o’ that suspicion that he’d sunk some ships a-cause of his foolishnesses at Flores Straits; and now he’s a wherryman from Portsmouth to Gosport, where the tides run crossways and you can’t row straight for ten strokes together. . . . So late as all this! Look!’

Fenwick left his chair, passed to the Light, touched something that clicked, and the glare ceased with a suddenness that was pain. Day had come, and the Channel needed St. Cecilia no longer. The sea-fog rolled back from the cliffs in trailed wreaths and dragged patches, as the sun rose and made the dead sea alive and splendid. The stillness of the morning held us both silent as we stepped on the balcony. A lark went up from the cliffs behind St. Cecilia, and we smelt a smell of cows in the lighthouse pastures below.

Then we were both at liberty to thank the Lord for another day of clean and wholesome life.

A CONFERENCE OF THE POWERS

(1890)

Life liveth but in life, and doth not roam
To other lands if all be well at home:
'Solid as ocean foam,' quoth ocean foam.

THE room was blue with the smoke of three pipes and a cigar. The leave-season had opened in India, and the firstfruits on this side of the water were 'Tick' Boileau, of the 45th Bengal Cavalry, who called on me, after three years' absence, to discuss old things which had happened. Fate, who always does her work handsomely, sent up the same staircase within the same hour The Infant, fresh from Upper Burma, and he and Boileau looking out of my window saw walking in the street one Nevin, late in a Gurkha regiment which had been through the Black Mountain Expedition. They yelled to him to come up, and the whole street was aware that they desired him to come up, and he came up, and there followed Pandemonium in my room because we had forgathered from the ends of the earth, and three of us were on a holiday, and none of us were twenty-five, and all the delights of all London lay waiting our pleasure.

Boileau took the only other chair, The Infant, by right of his bulk, the sofa; and Nevin, being a little man, sat cross-legged on the top of the revolving bookcase, and we

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all said, 'Who'd ha' thought it!' and 'What are you doing here?' till speculation was exhausted and the talk went over to inevitable 'shop.' Boileau was full of a great scheme for winning a military attache-ship at St. Petersburg; Nevin had hopes of the Staff College, and The Infant had been moving heaven and earth and the Horse Guards for a commission in the Egyptian army.

'What's the use o' that?' said Nevin, twirling round on the bookcase.

'Oh, heaps! 'Course, if you get stuck with a Fellaheen regiment, you're sold; but if you are appointed to a Soudanese lot, you're in clover. They are first-class fighting-men—and just think of the eligible central position of Egypt in the next row.'

This was putting the match to a magazine. We all began to explain the Central Asian question off-hand, flinging army corps from the Helmund to Kashmir with more than Russian recklessness. Each of the boys made for himself a war to his own liking, and when we had settled all the details of Armageddon, killed all our senior officers, handled a division apiece, and nearly torn the Atlas in two in attempts to explain our theories, Boileau needs must lift up his voice above the clamour, and cry, 'Anyhow it'll be the Hell of a row!' in tones that carried conviction far down the staircase.

Entered, unperceived in the smoke, William the Silent. 'Gen'elman to see you, sir,' said he, and disappeared, leaving in his stead none other than Mr. Eustace Cleever. William would have introduced the Dragon of Wantley with equal disregard of present company.

'I—I beg your pardon. I didn't know that there was anybody—with you. I—'

But it was not seemly to allow Mr. Cleever to depart:

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he was a great man. The boys remained where they were, for any movement would have choked up the little room. Only when they saw his gray hairs they stood on their feet, and when The Infant caught the name, he said:

‘Are you—did you write that book called “As it was in the Beginning”?’

Mr. Cleever admitted that he had written the book.

‘Then—then I don’t know how to thank you, sir,’ said The Infant, flushing pink. ‘I was brought up in the country you wrote about—all my people live there; and I read the book in camp on the Hlinedatalone, and I knew every stick and stone, and the dialect too; and, by Jove! it was just like being at home and hearing the country-people talk. Nevin, you know “As it was in the Beginning”?’ So does Ti—Boileau.’

Mr. Cleever has tasted as much praise, public and private, as one man may safely swallow; but it seemed to me that the outspoken admiration in The Infant’s eyes and the little stir in the little company came home to him very nearly indeed.

‘Won’t you take the sofa?’ said The Infant. ‘I’ll sit on Boileau’s chair; and’—here he looked at me to spur me to my duties as a host; but I was watching the novelist’s face. Cleever had not the least intention of going away, but settled himself on the sofa.

Following the first great law of the Army, which says ‘all property is common except money, and you’ve only got to ask the next man for that,’ The Infant offered tobacco and drink. It was the least he could do; but not the most lavish praise in the world held half as much appreciation and reverence as The Infant’s simple ‘Say when, sir,’ above the long glass.

Cleever said ‘when,’ and more thereto, for he was a

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golden talker, and he sat in the midst of hero-worship devoid of all taint of self-interest. The boys asked him of the birth of his book and whether it was hard to write, and how his notions came to him; and he answered with the same absolute simplicity as he was questioned. His big eyes twinkled, he dug his long thin hands into his gray beard and tugged it as he grew animated. He dropped little by little from the peculiar pinching of the broader vowels—the indefinable ‘Euh,’ that runs through the speech of the pundit caste—and the elaborate choice of words, to freely-mouthed ‘ows’ and ‘ois,’ and, for him at least, unfettered colloquialisms. He could not altogether understand the boys, who hung upon his words so reverently. The line of the chin-strap, that still showed white and untanned on cheek-bone and jaw, the steadfast young eyes puckered at the corners of the lids with much staring through red-hot sunshine, the slow, untroubled breathing, and the curious, crisp, curt speech seemed to puzzle him equally. He could create men and women, and send them to the uttermost ends of the earth, to help delight and comfort; he knew every mood of the fields, and could interpret them to the cities, and he knew the hearts of many in city and the country, but he had hardly, in forty years, come into contact with the thing which is called a Subaltern of the Line. He told the boys this in his own way.

‘Well, how should you?’ said The Infant. ‘You—you’re quite different, y’ see, sir.’

The Infant expressed his ideas in his tone rather than his words, but Cleever understood the compliment.

‘We’re only Subs,’ said Nevin, ‘and we aren’t exactly the sort of men you’d meet much in your life, I s’pose.’

‘That’s true,’ said Cleever. ‘I live chiefly among

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men who write and paint, and sculp, and so forth. We have our own talk and our own interests, and the outer world doesn't trouble us much.'

'That must be awfully jolly,' said Boileau, at a venture. 'We have our own shop, too, but 't isn't half as interesting as yours, of course. You know all the men who've ever done anything; and we only knock about from place to place, and we do nothing.'

'The Army's a very lazy profession if you choose to make it so,' said Nevin. 'When there's nothing going on, there is nothing going on, and you lie up.'

'Or try to get a billet somewhere, to be ready for the next show,' said The Infant with a chuckle.

'To me,' said Cleever softly, 'the whole idea of warfare seems so foreign and unnatural, so essentially vulgar, if I may say so, that I can hardly appreciate your sensations. Of course, though, any change from life in garrison towns must be a godsend to you.'

Like many home-staying Englishmen, Cleever believed that the newspaper phrase he quoted covered the whole duty of the Army whose toils enabled him to enjoy his many-sided life in peace. The remark was not a happy one, for Boileau had just come off the Frontier, The Infant had been on the warpath for nearly eighteen months, and the little red man Nevin two months before had been sleeping under the stars at the peril of his life. But none of them tried to explain, till I ventured to point out that they had all seen service and were not used to idling. Cleever took in the idea slowly.

'Seen service?' said he. Then, as a child might ask. 'Tell me. Tell me everything about everything.'

'How do you mean?' said The Infant, delighted at being directly appealed to by the great man.

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‘Good Heavens! How am I to make you understand if you can’t see. In the first place, what is your age?’

‘Twenty-three next July,’ said The Infant promptly. Cleever questioned the others with his eyes.

‘I’m twenty-four,’ said Nevin.

‘And I’m twenty-two,’ said Boileau.

‘And you’ve all seen service?’

‘We’ve all knocked about a little bit, sir, but The Infant’s the war-worn veteran. He’s had two years’ work in Upper Burma,’ said Nevin.

‘When you say work, what do you mean, you extraordinary creatures?’

‘Explain it, Infant,’ said Nevin.

‘Oh, keeping things in order generally, and running about after little dakus—that’s dacoits—and so on. There’s nothing to explain.’

‘Make that young Leviathan speak,’ said Cleever impatiently, above his glass.

‘How can he speak?’ said I. ‘He’s done the work. The two don’t go together. But, Infant, you’re ordered to bukh.’

‘What about? I’ll try.’

‘Bukh about a daur. You’ve been on heaps of ’em,’ said Nevin.

‘What in the world does that mean? Has the Army a language of its own?’

The Infant turned very red. He was afraid he was being laughed at, and he detested talking before outsiders; but it was the author of ‘As it was in the Beginning’ who waited.

‘It’s all so new to me,’ pleaded Cleever; ‘and—and you said you liked my book.’

This was a direct appeal that The Infant could under-

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stand, and he began rather flurriedly, with much slang bred of nervousness—

‘Pull me up, sir, if I say anything you don’t follow. About six months before I took my leave out of Burma, I was on the Hlinedatalone, up near the Shan States, with sixty Tommies—private soldiers, that is—and another subaltern, a year senior to me. The Burmese business was a subaltern’s war, and our forces were split up into little detachments, all running about the country and trying to keep the dacoits quiet. The dacoits were having a first-class time, y’know—filling women up with kerosene and setting ’em alight, and burning villages, and crucifying people.’

The wonder in Eustace Cleever’s eyes deepened. He could not quite realise that the Cross still existed in any form.

‘Have you ever seen a crucifixion?’ said he.

‘Of course not. ’Shouldn’t have allowed it if I had; but I’ve seen the corpses. The dacoits had a trick of sending a crucified corpse down the river on a raft, just to show they were keeping their tails up and enjoying themselves. Well, that was the kind of people I had to deal with.’

‘Alone?’ said Cleever. Solitude of the soul he could understand—none better—but he had never in the body moved ten miles from his fellows.

‘I had my men, but the rest of it was pretty much alone. The nearest post that could give me orders was fifteen miles away, and we used to heliograph to them, and they used to give us orders same way—too many orders.’

‘Who was your C. O.?’ said Boileau.

‘Boulderby—Major. Pukka Boulderby; more Boun-

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der than pukka. He went out up Bhamo way. Shot, or cut down, last year,' said The Infant.

'What are these interludes in a strange tongue?' said Cleever to me.

'Professional information—like the Mississippi pilots' talk,' said I. 'He did not approve of his major, who died a violent death. Go on, Infant.'

'Far too many orders. You couldn't take the Tommies out for a two days' daur—that's expedition—without being blown up for not asking leave. And the whole country was humming with dacoits. I used to send out spies, and act on their information. As soon as a man came in and told me of a gang in hiding, I'd take thirty men with some grub, and go out and look for them, while the other subaltern lay doggo in camp.'

'Lay! Pardon me, but how did he lie?' said Cleever.

'Lay doggo—lay quiet, with the other thirty men. When I came back, he'd take out his half of the men, and have a good time of his own.'

'Who was he?' said Boileau.

'Carter-Deecey, of the Aurungabadis. Good chap, but too zubberdusty, and went bokhar four days out of seven. He's gone out, too. Don't interrupt a man.'

Cleever looked helplessly at me.

'The other subaltern,' I translated swiftly, 'came from a native regiment, and was overbearing in his demeanour. He suffered much from the fever of the country, and is now dead. Go on, Infant.'

'After a bit we got into trouble for using the men on frivolous occasions, and so I used to put my signaller under arrest to prevent him reading the helio-orders. Then I'd go out and leave a message to be sent an hour after I got clear of the camp, something like this: "Re-

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ceived important information; start in an hour unless countermanded." If I was ordered back, it didn't much matter. I swore the C.O.'s watch was wrong, or something, when I came back. The Tommies enjoyed the fun, and—Oh, yes, there was one Tommy who was the bard of the detachment. He used to make up verses on everything that happened.'

'What sort of verses?' said Cleever.

'Lovely verses; and the Tommies used to sing 'em. There was one song with a chorus, and it said something like this.' The Infant dropped into the true barrack-room twang:

'Theebaw, the Burma king, did a very foolish thing,
When 'e mustered 'ostile forces in ar-rai,
'E little thought that we, from far across the sea,
Would send our armies up to Mandalai!'

'O gorgeous!' said Cleever. 'And how magnificently direct! The notion of a regimental bard is new to me, but of course it must be so.'

'He was awf'ly popular with the men,' said The Infant. 'He had them all down in rhyme as soon as ever they had done anything. He was a great bard. He was always ready with an elegy when we picked up a Boh—that's a leader of dacoits.'

'How did you pick him up?' said Cleever.

'Oh! shot him if he wouldn't surrender.'

'You! Have you shot a man?'

There was a subdued chuckle from all three boys, and it dawned on the questioner that one experience in life which was denied to himself, and he weighed the souls of men in a balance, had been shared by three very young

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gentlemen of engaging appearance. He turned round on Nevin, who had climbed to the top of the bookcase, and was sitting cross-legged as before.

‘And have you, too?’

‘Think so,’ said Nevin sweetly. ‘In the Black Mountain. He was rolling cliffs on to my half-company, and spoiling our formation. I took a rifle from a man, and brought him down at the second shot.’

‘Good heavens! And how did you feel afterwards?’

‘Thirsty. I wanted a smoke, too.’

Cleever looked at Boileau—the youngest. Surely his hands were guiltless of blood.

Boileau shook his head and laughed. ‘Go on, Infant,’ said he.

‘And you too?’ said Cleever.

‘Fancy so. It was a case of cut, cut or be cut, with me; so I cut—One. I couldn’t do any more, sir.’

Cleever looked as though he would like to ask many questions, but The Infant swept on, in the full tide of his tale.

‘Well, we were called insubordinate young whelps at last, and strictly forbidden to take the Tommies out any more without orders. I wasn’t sorry, because Tommy is such an exacting sort of creature. He wants to live as though he were in barracks all the time. I was grubbing on fowls and boiled corn, but my Tommies wanted their pound of fresh meat, and their half ounce of this, and their two ounces of t’other thing, and they used to come to me and badger me for plug-tobacco when we were four days in jungle. I said: “I can get you Burma tobacco, but I don’t keep a canteen up my sleeve.” They couldn’t see it. They wanted all the luxuries of the season, confound ’em.’

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'You were alone when you were dealing with these men?' said Cleever, watching The Infant's face under the palm of his hand. He was getting new ideas, and they seemed to trouble him.

'Of course, unless you count the mosquitoes. They were nearly as big as the men. After I had to lie doggo I began to look for something to do; and I was great pals with a man called Hicksey in the Police, the best man that ever stepped on earth—a first-class man.'

Cleever nodded applause. He knew how to appreciate enthusiasm.

'Hicksey and I were as thick as thieves. He had some Burma mounted police—rummy chaps, armed with sword and Snider carbine. They rode punchy Burma ponies with string stirrups, red cloth saddles, and red bell-rope head-stalls. Hicksey used to lend me six or eight of them when I asked him—nippy little devils, keen as mustard. But they told their wives too much, and all my plans got known, till I learned to give false marching orders overnight, and take the men to quite a different village in the morning. Then we used to catch the simple daku before breakfast, and made him very sick. It's a ghastly country on the Hlinedatalone; all bamboo jungle, with paths about four feet wide winding through it. The dakus knew all the paths, and potted at us as we came round a corner; but the mounted police knew the paths as well as the dakus, and we used to go stalking 'em in and out. Once we flushed 'em, the men on the ponies had the advantage of the men on foot. We held all the country absolutely quiet, for ten miles round, in about a month. Then we took Boh Naghee, Hicksey and I and the Civil officer. That was a lark!'

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‘I think I am beginning to understand a little,’ said Cleever. ‘It was a pleasure to you to administer and fight?’

‘Rather! There’s nothing nicer than a satisfactory little expedition, when you find your plans fit together, and your conformation’s teek—correct, you know, and the whole subchiz—I mean, when everything works out like formulæ on a blackboard. Hicksey had all the information about the Boh. He had been burning villages and murdering people right and left, and cutting up Government convoys and all that. He was lying doggo in a village about fifteen miles off, waiting to get a fresh gang together. So we arranged to take thirty mounted police, and turn him out before he could plunder into our newly-settled villages. At the last minute, the Civil officer in our part of the world thought he’d assist at the performance.’

‘Who was he?’ said Nevin.

‘His name was Dennis,’ said The Infant slowly. ‘And we’ll let it stay so. He’s a better man now than he was then.’

‘But how old was the Civil power?’ said Cleever. ‘The situation is developing itself.’

‘He was about six-and-twenty, and he was awf’ly clever. He knew a lot of things, but I don’t think he was quite steady enough for dacoit-hunting. We started overnight for Boh Na-ghee’s village, and we got there just before morning, without raising an alarm. Dennis had turned out armed to his teeth—two revolvers, a carbine, and all sorts of things. I was talking to Hicksey about posting the men, and Dennis edged his pony in between us, and said, “What shall I do? What shall I do? Tell me what to do, you fellows.” We didn’t take

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much notice; but his pony tried to bite me in the leg, and I said, "Pull out a bit, old man, till we've settled the attack." He kept edging in, and fiddling with his reins and his revolvers, and saying, "Dear me! Dear me! Oh, dear me! What do you think I'd better do?" The man was in a deadly funk, and his teeth were chattering.'

'I sympathise with the Civil power,' said Cleever. 'Continue, young Clive.'

'The fun of it was, that he was supposed to be our superior officer. Hicksey took a good look at him, and told him to attach himself to my party. 'Beastly mean of Hicksey, that. The chap kept on edging in and bothering, instead of asking for some men and taking up his own position, till I got angry, and the carbines began popping on the other side of the village. Then I said, "For God's sake be quiet, and sit down where you are! If you see anybody come out of the village, shoot at him." I knew he couldn't hit a hayrick at a yard. Then I took my men over the garden wall—over the palisades, y'know—somehow or other, and the fun began. Hicksey had found the Boh in bed under a mosquito-curtain, and he had taken a flying jump on to him.'

'A flying jump!' said Cleever. 'Is that also war?'

'Yes,' said The Infant, now thoroughly warmed. 'Don't you know how you take a flying jump on to a fellow's head at school, when he snores in the dormitory? The Boh was sleeping in a bedful of swords and pistols, and Hicksey came down like Zazel through the netting, and the net got mixed up with the pistols and the Boh and Hicksey, and they all rolled on the floor together. I laughed till I couldn't stand, and Hicksey was cursing me for not helping him; so I left him to fight it out and

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went into the village. Our men were slashing about and firing, and so were the dacoits, and in the thick of the mess some ass set fire to a house, and we all had to clear out. I froze on to the nearest daku and ran to the palisade, shoving him in front of me. He wriggled loose, and bounded over the other side. I came after him; but when I had one leg on one side and one leg the other of the palisade, I saw that the daku had fallen flat on Dennis's head. That man had never moved from where I left him. They rolled on the ground together, and Dennis's carbine went off and nearly shot me. The daku picked himself up and ran, and Dennis buzzed his carbine after him, and it caught him on the back of his head, and knocked him silly. You never saw anything so funny in your life. I doubled up on the top of the palisade and hung there, yelling with laughter. But Dennis began to weep like anything. "Oh, I've killed a man," he said. "I've killed a man, and I shall never know another peaceful hour in my life! Is he dead? Oh, is he dead? Good Lord, I've killed a man!" I came down and said, "Don't be a fool"; but he kept on shouting, "Is he dead?" till I could have kicked him. The daku was only knocked out of time with the carbine. He came to after a bit, and I said, "Are you hurt much?" He groaned and said "No." His chest was all cut with scrambling over the palisade. "The white man's gun didn't do that," he said, "I did that, and I knocked the white man over." Just like a Burman, wasn't it? But Dennis wouldn't be happy at any price. He said: "Tie up his wounds. He'll bleed to death. Oh, he'll bleed to death!" "Tie 'em up yourself," I said, "if you're so anxious." "I can't touch him," said Dennis, "but here's my shirt." He took off his shirt, and fixed the

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braces again over his bare shoulders. I ripped the shirt up, and bandaged the dacoit quite professionally. He was grinning at Dennis all the time; and Dennis's haversack was lying on the ground, bursting full of sandwiches. Greedy hog! I took some, and offered some to Dennis. "How can I eat?" he said. "How can you ask me to eat? His very blood is on your hands now, and you're eating my sandwiches!" "All right," I said; "I'll give 'em to the daku." So I did, and the little chap was quite pleased, and wolfed 'em down like one o'clock.'

Cleever brought his hand down on the table with a thump that made the empty glasses dance. 'That's Art!' he said. 'Flat, flagrant mechanism! Don't tell me that happened on the spot!'

The pupils of The Infant's eyes contracted to two pin-points. 'I beg your pardon,' he said, slowly and stiffly, 'but I am telling this thing as it happened.'

Cleever looked at him a moment. 'My fault entirely,' said he; 'I should have known. Please go on.'

'Hicksey came out of what was left of the village with his prisoners and captives, all neatly tied up. Boh Naghee was first, and one of the villagers, as soon as he found the old ruffian helpless, began kicking him quietly. The Boh stood it as long as he could, and then groaned, and we saw what was going on. Hicksey tied the villager up, and gave him a half-a-dozen, good, with a bamboo, to remind him to leave a prisoner alone. You should have seen the old Boh grin. Oh! but Hicksey was in a furious rage with everybody. He'd got a wipe over the elbow that had tickled up his funny-bone, and he was rabid with me for not having helped him with the Boh and the mosquito-net. I had to explain that I couldn't do anything. If you'd seen 'em both tangled

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up together on the floor in one kicking cocoon, you'd have laughed for a week. Hicksey swore that the only decent man of his acquaintance was the Boh, and all the way to camp Hicksey was talking to the Boh, and the Boh was complaining about the soreness of his bones. When we got back, and had had a bath, the Boh wanted to know when he was going to be hanged. Hicksey said he couldn't oblige him on the spot, but had to send him to Rangoon. The Boh went down on his knees, and reeled off a catalogue of his crimes—he ought to have been hanged seventeen times over, by his own confession—and implored Hicksey to settle the business out of hand. "If I'm sent to Rangoon," said he, "they'll keep me in jail all my life, and that is a death every time the sun gets up or the wind blows." But we had to send him to Rangoon, and, of course, he was let off down there, and given penal servitude for life. When I came to Rangoon I went over the jail—I had helped to fill it, y' know—and the old Boh was there, and he spotted me at once. He begged for some opium first, and I tried to get him some, but that was against the rules. Then he asked me to have his sentence changed to death, because he was afraid of being sent to the Andamans. I couldn't do that either, but I tried to cheer him, and told him how things were going up-country, and the last thing he said was—"Give my compliments to the fat white man who jumped on me. If I'd been awake I'd have killed him." I wrote that to Hicksey next mail, and—and that's all. I'm 'fraid I've been gassing awf'ly, sir.'

Cleever said nothing for a long time. The Infant looked uncomfortable. He feared that, misled by enthusiasm, he had filled up the novelist's time with unprofitable recital of trivial anecdotes.

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Then said Cleever, 'I can't understand. Why should you have seen and done all these things before you have cut your wisdom-teeth?'

'Don't know,' said The Infant apologetically. 'I haven't seen much—only Burmese jungle.'

'And dead men, and war, and power, and responsibility,' said Cleever, under his breath. 'You won't have any sensations left at thirty, if you go on as you have done. But I want to hear more tales—more tales!' He seemed to forget that even subalterns might have engagements of their own.

'We're thinking of dining out somewhere—the lot of us—and going on to the Empire afterwards,' said Nevin, with hesitation. He did not like to ask Cleever to come too. The invitation might be regarded as perilously near to 'cheek.' And Cleever, anxious not to wag a gray beard unbidden among boys at large, said nothing on his side.

Boileau solved the little difficulty by blurting out: 'Won't you come too, sir?'

Cleever almost shouted 'Yes,' and while he was being helped into his coat, continued to murmur 'Good heavens!' at intervals in a way that the boys could not understand.

'I don't think I've been to the Empire in my life,' said he; 'but—what is my life after all? Let us go.'

They went out with Eustace Cleever, and I sulked at home because they had come to see me but had gone over to the better man; which was humiliating. They packed him into a cab with utmost reverence, for was he not the author of 'As it was in the Beginning,' and a person in whose company it was an honour to go abroad? From all I gathered later, he had taken less interest in the performance before him than in their conversations,

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and they protested with emphasis that he was 'as good a man as they make. 'Knew what a man was driving at almost before he said it; and yet he's so damned simple about things that any man knows.' That was one of many comments.

At midnight they returned, announcing that they were 'highly respectable gondoliers,' and that oysters and stout were what they chiefly needed. The eminent novelist was still with them, and I think he was calling them by their shorter names. I am certain that he said he had been moving in worlds not realised, and that they had shown him the Empire in a new light.

Still sore at recent neglect, I answered shortly, 'Thank heaven we have within the land ten thousand as good as they,' and when he departed, asked him what he thought of things generally.

He replied with another quotation, to the effect that though singing was a remarkably fine performance, I was to be quite sure that few lips would be moved to song if they could find a sufficiency of kissing.

Whereby I understood that Eustace Cleever, decorator and colourman in words, was blaspheming his own Art, and would be sorry for this in the morning.

MY LORD THE ELEPHANT

(1892)

'Less you want your toes trod off you'd better get back
at once,

For the bullocks are walkin' two by two,

The byles are walkin' two by two,

The bullocks are walkin' two by two,

An' the elephants bring the guns!

Ho! Yuss!

Great—big—long—black forty-pounder guns:

Jiggery-jolty to and fro,

Each as big as a launch in tow—

Blind—dumb—broad-breeched beggars o' batterin'
guns!

'Barrack-Room Ballad.'

TOUCHING the truth of this tale there need be no doubt at all, for it was told to me by Mulvaney at the back of the elephant-lines, one warm evening when we were taking the dogs out for exercise. The twelve Government elephants rocked at their pickets outside the big mud-walled stables (one arch, as wide as a bridge-arch, to each restless beast), and the mahouts were preparing the evening meal. Now and again some impatient youngster would smell the cooking flour-cakes and squeal; and the naked little

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children of the elephant-lines would strut down the row shouting and commanding silence, or, reaching up, would slap at the eager trunks. Then the elephants feigned to be deeply interested in pouring dust upon their heads, but, so soon as the children passed, the rocking, fidgeting, and muttering broke out again.

The sunset was dying, and the elephants heaved and swayed dead black against the one sheet of rose-red low down in the dusty gray sky. It was at the beginning of the hot weather, just after the troops had changed into their white clothes, so Mulvaney and Ortheris looked like ghosts walking through the dusk. Learoyd had gone off to another barrack to buy sulphur ointment for his last dog under suspicion of mange, and with delicacy had put his kennel into quarantine at the back of the furnace where they cremate the anthrax cases.

'You wouldn't like mange, little woman?' said Ortheris, turning my terrier over on her fat white back with his foot. 'You're no end bloomin' partic'lar, you are. 'Oo wouldn't take no notice o' me t'other day 'cause she was goin' 'ome all alone in 'er dorg-cart, eh? Settin' on the box-seat like a bloomin' little tart, you was, Vicky. Now you run along an' make them 'uttees 'oller. Sick 'em, Vicky, loo!'

Elephants loathe little dogs. Vixen barked herself down the pickets, and in a minute all the elephants were kicking and squealing and clucking together.

'Oh, you soldier-men,' said a mahout angrily, 'call off your she-dog. She is frightening our elephant-folk.'

'Rummy beggars!' said Ortheris meditatively. ''Call 'em people, same as if they was. An' they are too. Not so bloomin' rummy when you come to think of it, neither.'

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Vixen returned yapping to show that she could do it again if she liked, and established herself between Ortheris's knees, smiling a large smile at his lawful dogs who dared not fly at her.

'Seed the battery this mornin'?' said Ortheris. He meant the newly-arrived elephant-battery; otherwise he would have said simply 'guns.' Three elephants harnessed tandem go to each gun, and those who have not seen the big forty-pounders of position trundling along in the wake of their gigantic team have yet something to behold. The lead-elephant had behaved very badly on parade; had been cut loose, sent back to the lines in disgrace, and was at that hour squealing and lashing out with his trunk at the end of the line; a picture of blind, bound bad temper. His mahout, standing clear of the flail-like blows, was trying to soothe him.

'That's the beggar that cut up on p'rade. 'E's must,' said Ortheris pointing. 'There'll be murder in the lines soon, and then, per'aps, 'e'll get loose an' we'll 'ave to be turned out to shoot 'im, same as when one o' they native king's elephants musted last June. 'Ope 'e will.'

'Must be sugared!' said Mulvaney contemptuously from his resting-place on the pile of dried bedding. 'He's no more than in a powerful bad timper wid bein' put upon. I'd lay my kit he's new to the gun-team, an' by natur' he hates haulin'. Ask the mahout, sorr.'

I hailed the old white-bearded mahout who was lavishing pet words on his sulky red-eyed charge.

'He is not musth,' the man replied indignantly; 'only his honour has been touched. Is an elephant an ox or a mule that he should tug at a trace? His strength is in his head—Peace, peace, my Lord! It was not my fault that they yoked thee this morning!—Only a low-caste

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elephant will pull a gun, and he is a Kumeria of the Doon. It cost a year and the life of a man to break him to burden. They of the Artillery put him in the gun-team because one of their base-born brutes had gone lame. No wonder that he was, and is wrath.'

'Rummy! Most unusual rum,' said Ortheris. 'Gawd, 'e is in a temper, though! S'pose 'e got loose!'

Mulvaney began to speak, but checked himself, and I asked the mahout what would happen if the heel-chains broke.

'God knows, who made elephants,' he said simply. 'In his now state peradventure he might kill you three, or run at large till his rage abated. He would not kill me except he were musth. Then would he kill me before any one in the world, because he loves me. Such is the custom of the elephant-folk; and the custom of us mahout-people matches it for foolishness. We trust each our own elephant, till our own elephant kills us. Other castes trust women, but we the elephant-folk. I have seen men deal with enraged elephants and live; but never was man yet born of woman that met my lord the elephant in his musth and lived to tell of the taming. They are enough bold who meet him angry.'

I translated. Then said Terence: 'Ask the heathen if he iver saw a man tame an elephint,—anyways—a white man.'

'Once,' said the mahout, 'I saw a man astride of such a beast in the town of Cawnpore; a bareheaded man, a white man, beating it upon the head with a gun. It was said he was possessed of devils or drunk.'

'Is ut like, think you, he'd be doin' it sober?' said Mulvaney after interpretation, and the chained elephant roared.

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‘There’s only one man top of earth that would be the partic’lar kind o’ sorter bloomin’ fool to do it!’ said Ortheris. ‘When was that, Mulvaney?’

‘As the naygur sez, in Cawnpore; an’ I was that fool—in the days av my youth. But it came about as naturil as wan thing leads to another,—me an’ the elephint, and the elephint and me; an’ the fight betune us was the most naturil av all.’

‘That’s just wot it would ha’ been,’ said Ortheris. ‘Only you must ha’ been more than usual full. You done one queer trick with an elephant that I know of, why didn’t you never tell us the other one?’

‘Bekase, onless you had heard the naygur here say what he has said spontaneous, you’d ha’ called me for a liar, Stanley, my son, an’ it would ha’ bin my duty an’ my delight to give you the father an’ mother av a beltin’. There’s only wan fault about you, little man, an’ that’s thinking you know all there is in the world, an’ a little more. ’Tis a fault that has made away wid a few orf’cers I’ve served undher, not to spake av ivry man but two that I iver thried to make into a privit.’

‘Ho!’ said Ortheris with ruffled plumes, ‘an’ ’oo was your two bloomin’ little Sir Garnets, eh?’

‘Wan was mesilf,’ said Mulvaney with a grin that darkness could not hide; ‘an’—seein’ that he’s not here there’s no harm speakin’ av’ him—t’other was Jock.’

‘Jock’s no more than a ’ayrick in trousies. ’E be-’aves like one; an’ ’e can’t ’it one at a ’undred; ’e was born on one, an’ s’welp me ’e’ll die under one for not bein’ able to say wot ’e wants in a Christian lingo,’ said Ortheris, jumping up from the piled fodder only to be swept off his legs. Vixen leaped upon his stomach, and the other dogs followed and sat down there.

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‘I know what Jock is like,’ I said. ‘I want to hear about the elephant, though.’

‘It’s another o’ Mulvaney’s bloomin’ panoramas,’ said Ortheris, gasping under the dogs. ‘‘Im an’ Jock for the ’ole bloomin’ British Army! You’ll be sayin’ you won Waterloo next,—you an’ Jock. Garn!’

Neither of us thought it worth while to notice Ortheris. The big gun-elephant threshed and muttered in his chains, giving tongue now and again in crashing trumpet-peals, and to this accompaniment Terence went on: ‘In the beginnin’,’ said he, ‘me bein’ what I was, there was a misunderstandin’ wid my sergeant that was then. He put his spite on me for various reasons,—’

The deep-set eyes twinkled above the glow of the pipe-bowl, and Ortheris grunted, ‘Another petticoat!’

—‘For various an’ promiscuous reasons; an’ the up-shot av it was that he come into barricks wan afternoon whin’ I was settlin’ my cow-lick before goin’ walkin’, called me a big baboon (which I was not), an’ a demoralisin’ beggar (which I was), an’ bid me go on fatigue thin an’ there, helpin’ shift E. P. tents, fourteen av thim from the rest-camps. At that, me bein’ set on my walk—’

‘Ah!’ from under the dogs, ‘‘e’s a Mermon, Vicky. Don’t you ’ave nothin’ to do with ’im, little dorg.’

—‘Set on my walk, I tould him a few things that came up in my mind, an’ wan thing led on to another, an’ be-tune talkin’ I made time for to hit the nose av him so that he’d be no Venus to any woman for a week to come. ’Twas a fine big nose, and well it paid for a little groom-in’. Afther that I was so well pleased wid my handicraftfulness that I niver raised fist on the gyard that came to take me to Clink. A child might ha’ led me along, for I knew old Kearney’s nose was ruined. That

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summer the Ould Rig'ment did not use their own Clink, bekase the cholera was hangin' about there like mildew on wet boots, an' 'twas murdher to confine in ut. We borrowed the Clink that belonged to the Holy Christians (the rig'ment that has never seen service yet), and that lay a matther av a mile away, acrost two p'rade-grounds an' the main road, an' all the ladies av Cawnpore goin' out for their afternoon dhrive. So I moved in the best av society, my shadow dancin' along forninst me, an' the gyard as solemn as putty, the bracelets on my wrists, an' my heart full contint wid the notion av Kearney's pro—pro—proboscium in a shling.

'In the middle av ut all I perceived a gunner-orf'cer in full rig'mentals perusin' down the road, hell-for-leather, wid his mouth open. He fetched wan woild despairin' look on the dog-kyarts an' the polite society av Cawnpore, an' thin he dived like a rabbut into a dhrein by the side av the road.

'“Bhoys,” sez I, “that orf'cer's dhrunk. 'Tis scandalus. Let's take him to Clink too.”

'The corp'ril of the gyard made a jump for me, unlocked my stringers, an' he sez: “If it comes to runnin', run for your life. If it doesn't, I'll trust your honour. Anyways,” sez he, “come to Clink whin you can.”

'Then I behild him runnin' wan way, stuffin' the bracelets in his pocket, they bein' Gov'ment property, and the gyard runnin' another, an' all the dog-kyarts runnin' all ways to wanst, an' me alone lookin' down the red bag av a mouth av an elephint forty-two feet high at the shoulder, tin feet wide, wid tusks as long as the Ochterlony Monumint. That was my first reconnaissance. Maybe he was not quite so contagious, nor quite so tall, but I didn't stop to throw out pickets. Mother av

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Hiven, how I ran down the road! The baste began to inveshtigate the dhrain wid the gunner-orf'cer in ut; an' that was the makin' av me. I tripped over wan of the rifles that my gyard had discarded (onsoldierly blackguards they was!), and whin I got up I was facin' t'other way about an' the elephint was huntin' for the gunner-orf'cer. I can see his big fat back yet. Excipit that he didn't dig, he car'ied on for all the world like little Vixen here at a rat-hole. He put his head down (by my sowl he nearly stood on ut!) to shquint down the dhrain; thin he'd grunt, and run round to the other ind in case the orf'cer was gone out by the back door; an' he'd shtuff his trunk down the flue an' get ut filled wid mud, an' blow ut out, an' grunt, an' swear! My troth, he swore all hiven down upon that orf'cer; an' what a commissariat elephint had to do wid a gunner-orf'cer passed me. Me havin' nowhere to go except to Clink, I stud in the road wid the rifle, a Snider an' no amm'nition, philosophisin' upon the rear ind av the animal. All round me, miles and miles, there was howlin' desolation, for ivry human sowl wid two legs, or four for the matther av that, was ambuscadin', an' this ould rapparee stud on his head tuggin' and gruntin' above the dhrain, his tail stickin' up to the sky, an' he thryin' to thrumpet through three feet av road-sweepin's up his thrunk. Begad, 'twas wickud to behold!

'Subsequint he caught sight av me standin' alone in the wide, wide world lanin' on the rifle. That dishcomposed him, bekase he thought I was the gunner-orf'cer got out unbeknownst. He looked betune his feet at the dhrain, an' he looked at me, an' I sez to myself: "Terence, my son, you've been watchin' this Noah's ark too long. Run for your life!" Dear knows I wanted to tell him I was only a poor privit on my way to

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Clink, an' no orf'cer at all, at all; but he put his ears forward av his thick head, an' I rethreated down the road grippin' the rifle, my back as cowld as a tombstone, and the slack av my trousies, where I made sure he'd take hould, crawlin' wid,—wid invidjus apprehension.

'I might ha' run till I dhropped, bekase I was betune the two straight lines av the road an' a man, or a thousand men for the matther av that, are the like av sheep in keepin' betune right an' left marks.'

'Same as canaries,' said Ortheris from the darkness. 'Draw a line on a bloomin' little board, put their bloom-in' little beaks there; stay so for hever and hever, amen, they will. 'Seed a 'ole reg'ment, I 'ave, walk crabways along the edge of a two-foot water-cut 'stid o' thinkin' to cross it. Men is sheep—bloomin' sheep. Go on.'

'But I saw his shadow wid the tail av my eye,' continued the man of experiences, 'an' "Wheel," I sez, "Terence, wheel!" an' I wheeled. 'Tis truth that I cud hear the shparks flyin' from my heels; an' I shpun into the nearest compound, fetched wan jump from the gate to the veranda av the house, an' fell over a tribe of nay-gurs wid a half-caste boy at a desk, all manufacturin' harness. 'Twas Antonio's Carriage Emporium at Cawn-pore. You know ut, sorr?'

'Ould Grambags must ha' wheeled abreast wid me, for his thrunk came lickin' into the veranda like a belt in a barrick-room row, before I was in the shop. The nay-gurs an' the half-caste boy howled an' wint out at the backdoor, an' I stud lone as Lot's wife among the harness. A powerful thirsty thing is harness, by reason av the smell to ut.

'I wint into the backroom, nobody bein' there to invite, an' I found a bottle av whisky and a goglet av wather.

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The first an' the second dhrink I never noticed bein' dhry, but the fourth an' the fifth tuk good hould av me an' I began to think scornful av elephints. "Take the upper ground in manœ'vrin', Terence," I sez; "an' you'll be a gen'ral yet." sez I. An' wid that I wint up to the flat mud roof av the house an' looked over the edge av the parapit, threadin' delicate. Ould Barrel-belly was in the compound, walkin' to an' fro, pluckin' a piece av grass here an' a weed there, for all the world like our colonel that is now whin his wife's given him a talkin' down an' he's prom'nadin' to ease his timper. His back was to me, an' by the same token I hiccupped. He checked in his walk, wan ear forward like a deaf ould lady wid an ear-thrumpet, an' his thrunk hild out in a kind av fore-reaching hook. Thin he wagged his ear sayin', "Do my sinses deceive me?" as plain as print, an he recomminst promenadin'. You know Antonio's compound? 'Twas as full thin as 'tis now av new kyarts and ould kyarts, an' second-hand kyarts an' kyarts for hire,—landos, an' b'rooshes, an' brooms, an' wag'nettes av ivry description. Thin I hiccupped again, an' he began to study the ground beneath him, his tail whistlin' wid emotion. Thin he lapped his thrunk round the shaft av a wag'nette an' dhrew it out circumspectuous an' thoughtful. "He's not there," he sez, fumblin' in the cushions wid his thrunk. Thin I hiccupped again, an' wid that he lost his patience good an' all, same as this wan in the lines here.'

The gun-elephant was breaking into peal after peal of indignant trumpetings, to the disgust of the other animals who had finished their food and wished to drowse. Between the outcries we could hear him picking restlessly at his ankle ring.

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‘As I was sayin’,’ Mulvaney went on, ‘he behaved dishgraceful. He let out wid his fore-fut like a steam-hammer, bein’ convinced that I was in ambuscade adjacent; an’ that wag’nette ran back among the other carriages like a field-gun in charge. Thin he hauled ut out again an’ shuk ut, an’ by nature it came all to little pieces. Afther that he went sheer damn, slam, dancin’, lunatic, double-shuffle demented wid the whole of Antonio’s shtock for the season. He kicked, an’ he straddled, and he stamped, an’ he pounded all at wanst, his big bald head bobbin’ up an’ down, solemn as a rigadoon. He tuk a new shiny broom an’ kicked ut on wan corner, an’ ut opened out like a blossomin’ lily; an’ he shtuck wan fool-foot through the flure av ut an’ a wheel was shpinnin’ on his tusk. At that he got scared, an’ by this an’ that he fair sat down plump among the carriages, an’ they pricked ’im wid splinters till he was a boundin’ pincushin. In the middle av the mess, whin the kyarts was climbin’ wan on top av the other, an’ rickochettin’ off the mud walls, an’ showin’ their agility, wid him tearin’ their wheels off, I heard the sound of distressful wailin’ on the housetops, an’ the whole Antonio firm an’ fam’ly was cursin’ me an’ him from the roof next door; me bekase I’d taken refuge wid them, and him bekase he was playin’ shtep-dances wid the carriages av the aristocracy.

“‘Divart his attention,’” sez Antonio, dancin’ on the roof in his big white waistcoat. “‘Divart his attention,’” he sez, “or I’ll prosecute you.” An the whole fam’ly shouts, “Hit him a kick, mister soldier.”

“‘He’s divartin’ himself,” I sez, for it was just the worth av a man’s life to go down into the compound. But by way av makin’ show I threw the whisky-bottle (’twas not full whin I came there) at him. He shpun

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round from what was left av the last kyart, an' shtuck his head into the veranda not three feet below me. Maybe 'twas the temptin'ness av his back or the whisky. Anyways, the next thing I knew was me, wid my hands full av mud an' mortar, all fours on his back, an' the Snider just slidin' off the slope av his head. I grabbed that an' scuffled on to his neck, dhruv my knees undher his big flappin' ears, an' we wint to glory out av that compound wid a shqueal that crawled up my back an' down my belly. Thin I remimbered the Snider, an' I grup ut by the muzzle an' hit him on the head. 'Twas most forlorn—like tappin' the deck av a throopship wid a cane to stop the engines whin you're seasick. But I parsevered till I sweated, an' at last from takin' no notice at all he began to grunt. I hit wid the full strength that was in me in those days, an' it might ha' discommoded him. We came back to the p'rade-groun' forty miles an hour, trumpetin' vainglorious. I never stopped hammerin' him for a minut'; 'twas by way av divartin' him from runnin' undher the trees an' scrapin' me off like a poultice. The p'rade-groun' an' the road was all empty, but the throops was on the roofs av the barricks, an' betune Ould Thrajectory's gruntin' an' mine (for I was winded wid my stone-breakin'), I heard them clappin' an' cheerin'. He was growin' more confused an' tuk to runnin' in circles.

“Begad,” sez I to mysilf, “there's dacincy in all things, Terence. 'Tis like you've shplit his head, and whin you come out av Clink you'll be put under stoppages for killin' a Gov'ment elephint.” At that I carressed him.'

“Ow the devil did you do that? Might as well pat a barrick,” said Ortheris.

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‘Thried all manner av endearin’ epitaphs, but bein’ more than a little shuk up I disremimbered what the divil would answer to. So, “Good dog,” I sez; “Pretty puss,” sez I; “Whoa mare,” I sez; an’ at that I fetched him a shtroke av the butt for to conciliate him, an’ he stud still among the barricks.

‘ “Will no one take me off the top av this murderin’ volcano?” I sez at the top av my shout; an’ I heard a man yellin’, “Hould on, faith an’ patience, the other elephints are comin’.” “Mother av Glory,” I sez, “will I rough-ride the whole stud? Come an’ take me down, ye cowards!”

‘Thin a brace av fat she-elephints wid mahouts an’ a commissariat sergint came shuffling round the corner av the barricks; an’ the mahouts was abusin’ ould Potiphar’s mother an’ blood-kin.

‘ “Obsarve my reinforcements,” I sez. “They’re goin’ to take you to Clink, my son”; an’ the child av calamity put his ears forward an’ swung head on to those females. The pluck av him, afther my oratorio on his brain-pan, wint to the heart av me. “I’m in dishgrace mesilf,” I sez, “but I’ll do what I can for ye. Will ye go to Clink like a man, or fight like a fool whin there’s no chanst?” Wid that I fetched him wan last lick on the head, an’ he fetched a tremenjus groan an’ dhropped his thrunk. “Think,” sez I to him, an’ “Halt!” I sez to the mahouts. They was anxious so to do. I could feel the ould reprobait meditating undher me. At last he put his thrunk straight out an’ gave a most melancholious toot (the like av a sigh wid an elephint); an’ by that I knew the white flag was up an’ the rest was no more than considherin’ his feelin’s.

‘ “He’s done,” I sez. “Kape open ordher left an’ right alongside. We’ll go to Clink quiet.”

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'Sez the commissariat sergeant to me from his elephint, "Are you a man or a mericle?" sez he.

' "I'm betwixt an' betune," I sez, thryin' to set up stiff-back. "An' what," sez I, "may ha' set this animal off in this opprobrious shtyle?" I sez, the gun-butt light an' easy on my hip an' my left hand dhropped, such as throopers behave. We was bowlin' on to the elephint-lines under escort all this time.

' "I was not in the lines whin the throuble began," sez the sergeant. "They tuk him off carryin' tents an' such like, an' put him to the gun-team. I knew he would not like ut, but by token it fair tore his heart out."

' "Faith, wan man's meat is another's poison," I sez. "'Twas bein' put on to carry tents that was the ruin av me." An' my heart warrumed to Ould Double Ends bekase he had been put upon.

' "We'll close on him here," sez the sergeant, whin we got to the elephint-lines. All the mahouts an' their childher was round the pickets cursin' my poney from a mile to hear. "You skip off on to my elephint's back," he sez. "There'll be throuble."

' "Sind that howlin' crowd away," I sez, "or he'll thrample the life out av thim." I cud feel his ears beginnin' to twitch. "An' do you an' your immoril shelephints go well clear away. I will get down here. He's an Irishman," I sez, "for all his long Jew's nose, an he shall be threatred like an Irishman."

' "Are ye tired av life?" sez the sergeant.

' "Divil a bit," I sez; "but wan av us has to win, an I'm av opinion 'tis me. Get back," I sez.

'The two elephints wint off, an' Smith O'Brine came to a halt dead above his own pickuts. "Down," sez I, whackin' him on the head, an' down he wint, shoul-

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dher over shouldher like a hill-side slippin' afther rain. "Now," sez I, slidin' down his nose an' runnin' to the front av him, "you will see the man that's betther than you."

'His big head was down betune his fore-feet, an' they was twisted in sideways like a kitten's. He looked the picture av innocence an' forlornsomeness, an' by this an' that his big hairy undherlip was thremblin', an' he winked his eyes together to kape from cryin'. "For the love av God," I sez, clean forgettin' he was a dumb baste, "don't take ut to heart so! Aisy, be aisy," I sez; an' wid that I rubbed his cheek an' betune his eyes an' the top av his thrunk, talkin' all the time. "Now," sez I, "I'll make you comfortable for the night. Send wan or two childher here," I sez to the sergeant who was watchin' for to see me killed. "He'll rouse at the sight av a man."'

'You got bloomin' clever all of a sudden,' said Ortheris. "'Ow did you come to know 'is funny little ways that soon?'

'Bekase,' said Terence with emphasis, 'bekase I had conquered the beggar, my son.'

'Ho!' said Ortheris between doubt and derision. 'G'on.'

'His mahout's child an' wan or two other line-babies came runnin' up, not bein' afraid av anything, an' some got wather, an' I washed the top av his poor sore head (begad, I had done him to a turn!), an' some picked the pieces av carts out av his hide, an' we scraped him, an' handled him all over, an' we put a thunderin' big poultice av neem-leaves (the same that we stick on a pony's gall) on his head, an' it looked like a smokin'-cap, an' we put a pile av young sugar-cane forninst him, an' he began to pick at ut. "Now," sez I, settin' down on his fore-foot, "we'll have a dhrink, an' let bygones be." I

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sent a naygur-child for a quart av arrack, an' the sergeant's wife she sint me out four fingers av whisky, an' when the liquor came I cud see by the twinkle in Ould Typhoon's eye that he was no more a stranger to ut than me,—worse luck, than me! So he tuk his quart like a Christian, an' thin I put his shackles on, chained him fore an' aft to the pickets, an' gave him my blessin' an wint back to barricks.'

'And after?' I said in the pause.

'Ye can guess,' said Mulvaney. 'There was confusion, an' the colonel gave me ten rupees, an' the adj'tant gave me five, an' my comp'ny captain gave me five, an' the men carried me round the barricks shoutin'.'

'Did you go to Clink?' said Ortheris.

'I niver heard a word more about the misundherstandin' wid Kearney's beak, if that's what you mane; but sev'ril av the bhoys was tuk off sudden to the Holy Christians' Hotel that night. Small blame to thim,—they had twenty rupees in dhrinks. I wint to lie down an' sleep ut off, for I was as done an' double done as him there in the lines. 'Tis no small thing to go ride elephints.

'Subsequent, me an' the Venerable Father av Sin became mighty friendly. I wud go down to the lines, whin I was in dishgrace, an' spend an afthernoont collogin' wid him; he chewin' wan stick av sugar-cane an' me another, as thick as thieves. He'd take all I had out av my pockets an' put ut back again, an' now an' thin I'd bring him beer for his dijistin', an' I'd give him advice about bein' well behaved an' keepin' off the books. Afther that he wint the way av the Army, an' that's bein' thransferred as soon as you've made a good friend.'

'So you never saw him again?' I demanded.

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‘Do you belave the first half av the affair?’ said Terence.

‘I’ll wait till Learoyd comes,’ I said evasively. Except when he was carefully tutored by the other two and the immediate money-benefit explained, the Yorkshireman did not tell lies; and Terence, I knew, had a profligate imagination.

‘There’s another part still,’ said Mulvaney. ‘Ortheris was in that.’

‘Then I’ll believe it all,’ I answered, not from any special belief in Ortheris’s word, but from desire to learn the rest. Ortheris stole a pup from me when our acquaintance was new, and with the little beast stifling under his overcoat, denied not only the theft, but that he ever was interested in dogs.

‘That was at the beginnin’ av the Afghan business,’ said Mulvaney; ‘years afther the men that had seen me do the thrick was dead or gone home. I came not to speak av ut at the last,—bekase I do not care to knock the face av ivry man that calls me a liar. At the very beginnin’ av the marchin’ I wint sick like a fool. I had a boot-gall, but I was all for keepin’ up wid the rig’mint and such like foolishness. So I finished up wid a hole in my heel that you cud ha’ dhruv a tent-peg into. Faith, how often have I preached that to recruits since, for a warnin’ to thim to look afther their feet! Our docthor, who knew our business as well as his own, he sez to me, in the middle av the Tangi Pass it was: “That’s sheer damned carelessness,” sez he. “How often have I tould you that a marchin’ man is no stronger than his feet,—his feet,—his feet!” he sez. “Now to hospital you go,” he sez, “for three weeks, an expense to your Quane an’ a nuisance to your counthry. Next time,” sez he, “per-

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haps you'll put some av the whisky you pour down your throat, an' some av the tallow you put into your hair, into your socks," sez he. Faith he was a just man. So soon as we come to the head av the Tangi I wint to hospital, hoppin' on wan fut, woild wid disappointment 'Twas a field-hospital (all flies an' native apothecaries an' liniment) dhropped, in a way av speakin', close by the head av the Tangi. The hospital guard was ravin' mad wid us sick for keepin' thim there, an' we was ravin' mad at bein' kept; an' through the Tangi, day an' night an' night an' day, the fut an' horse an' guns an' commissariat an' tents an' followers av the brigades was pourin' like a coffee-mill. The doolies came dancin' through, scores an' scores av thim, an' they'd turn up the hill to hospital wid their sick, an' I lay in bed nursin' my heel, an' hearin' the men bein' tuk out. I remimber wan night (the time I was tuk wid fever) a man came rowlin' through the tents an', "Is there any room to die here?" he sez; "there's none wid the columns"; an' at that he dhropped dead acrost a cot, an' thin the man in ut began to complain against dyin' all alone in the dust undher dead men. Thin I must ha' turned mad wid the fever, an' for a week I was prayin' the saints to stop the noise av the columns movin' through the Tangi. Gun-wheels it was that wore my head thin. Ye know how 'tis wid fever?

We nodded; there was no need to explain.

'Gun-wheels an' feet an' people shoutin', but mostly gun-wheels. 'Twas neither night nor day to me for a week. In the mornin' they'd rowl up the tent-flies, an' we sick cud look at the Pass an' considher what was comin' next. Horse, fut, or guns, they'd be sure to dhrop wan or two sick wid us an' we'd get news. Wan

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mornin', whin the fever hild off of me, I was waichin' the Tangi, an' 'twas just like the picture on the back-side av the Afghan medal,—men an' elephints an' guns comin' wan at a time crawlin' out of a dhrain.'

'It were a dhrain,' said Ortheris with feeling. 'I've fell out an' been sick in the Tangi twice; an' wot turns my innards ain't no bloomin' vi'lets neither.'

'The Pass gave a twist at the ind, so everything shot out suddint, an' they'd built a throop-bridge (mud an' dead mules) over a nullah at the head av ut. I lay an' counted the elephints (gun-elephints) thryin' the bridge wid their thrunks an' rolling out sagacious. The fifth elephint's head came round the corner, an' he threw up his thrunk, an' he fetched a toot, an' there he shtuck at the head of the Tangi like a cork in a bottle. "Faith," thinks I to mysilf, "he will not thrust the bridge; there will be throuble." '

'Trouble! My Gawd!' said Ortheris. 'Terence, I was be'ind that blooming 'uttee up to my stock in dust. Trouble!'

'Tell on then, little man; I only saw the hospital ind av ut.' Mulvaney knocked the ashes out of his pipe, as Ortheris heaved the dogs aside and went on.

'We was escort to them guns, three comp'nies of us,' he said. 'Dewcy was our major, an' our orders was to roll up anything we come across in the Tangi an' shove it out t'other end. Sort o' pop-gun picnic, see? We'd rolled up a lot o' lazy beggars o' native followers, an' some commissariat supplies that was bivoo-whackin' for ever seemin'ly, an' all the sweepin's of 'arf a dozen things what ought to 'ave bin at the front weeks ago, an' Dewcy, he sez to us: "You're most 'cart-breakin' sweeps," 'e sez. "For 'eving's sake," sez 'e, "do a

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little sweepin' now." So we swep',—s'welp me, 'ow we did sweep 'em along! There was a full reg'ment be'ind us; most anxious to get on they was; an' they kep' on sendin' to us with the colonel's compliments, an' what in 'ell was we stoppin' the way for, please? Oh, they was partic'lar polite! So was Dewey! 'E sent 'em back wot-for, an' 'e give us wot-for, an' we give the guns wot-for, an' they give the commissariat wot-for, an' the commissariat give first-class extry wot-for to the native followers, an' on we'd go again till we was stuck, an' the 'ole Pass 'ud be swimmin' Allelujah for a mile an' a 'arf. We 'adn't no tempers nor no seats to our trousies, an' our coats an' our rifles was chucked in the carts, so as we might ha' been cut up any minute, an' we was doin' drover-work. That was wot it was; drovin' on the Islin'ton road!

'I was close up at the 'ead of the column when we saw the end of the Tangi openin' out ahead of us, an' I sez: "The door's open, boys. 'Oo'll git to the gall'ry fust?" I sez. Then I saw Dewey screwin' 'is bloomin' eyeglass in 'is eye an' lookin' straight on. "Propped,—ther beggar!" he sez; an' the be'ind end o' that bloomin' old 'uttee was shinin' through the dust like a bloomin' old moon made o' tarpaulin. Then we 'alted, all chock-a-block, one atop o' the other, an' right at the back o' the guns there sails in a lot o' silly grinnin' camels, what the commissariat was in charge of—sailin' away as if they was at the Zoological Gardens an' squeezin' our men most awful. The dust was that up you couldn't see your 'and; an' the more we 'it 'em on the 'ead the more their drivers sez, "Accha! Accha!" an' by Gawd it was "at yer" before you knew where you was. An' that 'uttee's be'ind end stuck in the Pass good an' tight, an' no one knew wot for

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'Fust thing we 'ad to do was to fight they bloomin' camels. I wasn't goin' to be eat by no bull-oont, so I 'eld up my trousies with one 'and, standin' on a rock, an' 'it away with my belt at every nose I saw bobbin' above me. Then the camels fell back, an' they 'ad to fight to keep the rear-guard an' the native followers from crushin' into them; an' the rear-guard 'ad to send down the Tangi to warn the other reg'ment that we was blocked. I 'eard the mahouts shoutin' in front that the 'uttee wouldn't cross the bridge; an' I saw Dewcy skippin' about through the dust like a musquito-worm in a tank. Then our comp'nies got tired o' waitin' an' begun to mark time, an' some goat struck up "Tommy, make room for your Uncle." After that, you couldn't neither see nor breathe nor 'ear; an' there we was, singin' bloomin' serenades to the end of a' elephant that don't care for tunes! I sung too. I couldn't do nothin' else. They was strengthenin' the bridge in front, all for the sake of the 'uttee. By an' by a' orf'cer caught me by the throat an' choked the sing out of me. So I caught the next man I could see by the throat an' choked the sing out of 'im.'

'What's the difference between being choked by an officer and being hit?' I asked, remembering a little affair in which Ortheris's honour had been injured by his lieutenant.

'One's a bloomin' lark, an' one's a bloomin' insult!' said Ortheris. 'Besides, we was on service, an' no one cares what an orf'cer does then, s'long as 'e gets our rations an' don't get us unusual cut up. After that we got quiet, an' I 'eard Dewcy say that 'e'd court-martial the lot of us soon as we was out of the Tangi. Then we give three cheers for Dewcy an' three more for the Tangi;

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an' the 'uttee's be'ind end was stickin' in the Pass, so we cheered that. Then they said the bridge had been strengthened, an' we give three cheers for the bridge; but the 'uttee wouldn't move a bloomin' hinch. Not 'im! Then we cheered 'im again, an' Kite Dawson, that was corner-man at all the sing-songs ('e died on the way down), began to give a nigger lecture on the be'ind ends of elephants, an' Dewcy, 'e tried to keep 'is face for a minute, but, Lord, you couldn't do such when Kite was playin' the fool an' askin' whether 'e mightn't 'ave leave to rent a villa an' raise 'is orphan children in the Tangi, 'cos 'e couldn't get 'ome no more. Then up come a orf'cer (mounted, like a fool, too) from the reg'ment at the back with some more of his colonel's pretty little compliments, an' what was this delay, please. We sung 'im "There's another bloomin' row downstairs" till 'is 'orse bolted, an' then we give 'im three cheers; an' Kite Dawson sez 'e was goin' to write to "The Times" about the awful state of the streets in Afghanistan. The 'uttee's be'ind end was stickin' in the Pass all the time. At last one o' the mahouts came to Dewcy an' sez something. "Oh Lord!" sez Dewcy, "I don't know the beggar's visiting-list! I'll give 'im another ten minutes an' then I'll shoot 'im." Things was gettin' pretty dusty in the Tangi, so we all listened. "'E wants to see a friend," said Dewcy out loud to the men, an' 'e mopped 'is forehead an' sat down on a gun-tail.

'I leave it to you to judge 'ow the reg'ment shouted. "That's all right," we sez. "Three cheers for Mister Winterbottom's friend," sez we. "Why didn't you say so at first? Pass the word for old Swizzletail's wife," —and such like. Some o' the men they didn't laugh. They took it same as if it might have been a' introduc-

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tion like, 'cos they knew about 'uttees. Then we all run forward over the guns an' in an' out among the elephants' legs,—Lord, I wonder 'arf the comp'nies wasn't squashed—an' the next thing I saw was Terence 'ere, lookin' like a sheet o' wet paper, comin' down the 'illside wid a sergeant. "'Strewth," I sez. "I might ha' knowed 'e'd be at the bottom of any cat's trick," sez I. Now you tell wot 'appened your end?"

'I lay be the same as you did, little man, listenin' to the noises an' the bhoys singin'. Presintly I heard whisperin' an' the docthor sayin', "Get out av this, wakin' my sick wid your jokes about elephints." An' another man sez, all angry: "'Tis a joke that is stoppin' two thousand men in the Tangi. That son av sin av a haybag av an elephint sez, or the mahouts sez for him, that he wants to see a friend, an' he'll not lift hand or fut till he finds him. I'm wore out wid inthrojucin' sweepers an' coolies to him, an' his hide's as full o' bay'net pricks as a musquito-net av holes, an' I'm here undher ordhers, docthor dear, to ask if any one, sick or well, or alive or dead, knows an elephint. I'm not mad," he sez, settin' on a box av medical comforts. "'Tis my ordhers, an' 'tis my mother," he sez, "that would laugh at me for the father av all fools to-day. Does any wan here know an elephint?" We sick was all quiet.

' "Now you've had your answer," sez the docthor. "Go away."

' "Hould on," I sez, thinkin' mistiways in my cot, an' I did not know my own voice. "I'm by way av bein' acquainted wid an elephint, myself," I sez.

' "That's delirium," sez the docthor. "See what you've done, sergeant. Lie down, man," he sez, seein' me thryin' to get up.

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“ ‘Tis not,” I sez. “I rode him round Cawnpore barracks. He will not ha’ forgotten. I bruk his head wid a rifle.”

“ ‘Mad as a coot,” sez the docthor, an’ thin he felt my head. “It’s quare,” sez he. “Man,” he sez. “if you go, d’you know ’twill either kill or cure?”

“ ‘What do I care?” sez I. “If I’m mad, ’tis better dead.”

“ ‘Faith, that’s sound enough,” sez the docthor. “You’ve no fever on you now.”

“ ‘Come on,” sez the sergeant. “We’re all mad to-day, an’ the throops are wantin’ their dinner.” He put his arm round av me an’ I came into the sun, the hills an’ the rocks skippin’ big giddy-go-rounds. “Seventeen years have I been in the army,” sez the sergeant, “an’ the days av mericles are not done. They’ll be givin’ us more pay next. Begad,” he sez, “the brute knows you!”

‘Ould Obstructionist was screamin’ like all possist whin I came up, an’ I heard forty million men up the Tangi shoutin’, “He knows him!” Thin the big thrunk came round me an’ I was nigh fainting wid weakness. “Are you well, Malachi?” I sez, givin’ him the name he answered to in the lines. “Malachi, my son, are you well?” sez I, “for I am not.” At that he thrumpeted again till the Pass rang to ut, an’ the other elephints tuk it up. Thin I got a little strength back. “Down, Malachi,” I sez, “an’ put me up, but touch me tendher for I am not good.” He was on his knees in a minut an’ he slung me up as gentle as a girl. “Go on now, my son,” I sez. “You’re blockin’ the road.” He fetched wan more joyous toot, an’ swung grand out av the head av the Tangi, his gun-gear clankin’ on his back; an’ at the

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back av him there wint the most amazin' shout I ìver heard. An' thin I felt my head shpin, an' a mighty sweat bruk out on me, an' Malachi was growin' taller an' taller to me settin' on his back, an' I sez, foolish like an' weak, smilin' all round an' about, "Take me down," I sez, "or I'll fall."

'The next I remimber was lyin' in my cot again, limp as a chewed rag, but cured av the fever, an' the Tangi as empty as the back av my hand. They'd all gone up to the front, an' ten days later I wint up too, havin' blocked an' unblocked an entire army corps. What do you think av ut, sorr?'

'I'll wait till I see Learoyd,' I repeated.

'Ah'm here,' said a shadow from among the shadows. 'Ah've heard t' tale too.'

'Is it true, Jock?'

'Ay; true as t' owd bitch has gotten t' mange. Or-th'ris, yo' maun't let t' dawgs hev owt to do wi' her.'

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(1890)

From Shafiz Ullah Khan, son of Hyat Ullah Khan, in the honoured service of His Highness the Rao Sahib of Jagesur, which is in the northern borders of Hindustan, and Orderly to his Highness, this to Kazi Jamal-ud-Din, son of Kazi Ferisht-ud-Din Khan, in the service of the Rao Sahib, a minister much honoured. From that place which they call the Northbrook Club, in the town of London, under the shadow of the Empress, it is written:

Between brother and chosen brother be no long protestations of Love and Sincerity. Heart speaks naked to Heart, and the Head answers for all. Glory and Honour on thy house till the ending of the years and a tent in the borders of Paradise.

MY Brother,—In regard to that for which I was despatched follows the account. I have purchased for the Rao Sahib, and paid sixty pounds in every hundred, the things he most desired. Thus: two of the great fawn-coloured tiger-dogs, male and female, their pedigree being written upon paper, and silver collars adorning their necks. For the Rao Sahib's greater pleasure I send them at once by the steamer, in charge

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of a man who will render account of them at Bombay to the bankers there. They are the best of all dogs in this place. Of guns I have bought five—two silver-sprigged in the stock, with gold scroll-work about the hammer, both double-barrelled, hard-striking, cased in velvet and red leather; three of unequalled workmanship, but lacking adornment; a pump-gun that fires fourteen times—this when the Rao Sahib drives pig; a double-barrelled shell-gun for tiger, and that is a miracle of workmanship; and a fowling-piece no lighter than a feather, with green and blue cartridges by the thousand. Also a very small rifle for blackbuck, that yet would slay a man at four hundred paces. The harness with the golden crests for the Rao Sahib's coach is not yet complete, by reason of the difficulty of lining the red velvet into leather; but the two-horse harness and the great saddle with the golden holsters that is for state use have been put with camphor into a tin box, and I have signed it with my ring. Of the grained leather case of women's tools and tweezers for the hair and beard, of the perfumes and the silks, and all that was wanted by the women behind the curtains, I have no knowledge. They are matters of long coming, and the hawk-bells, hoods, and jesses with the golden lettering are as much delayed as they. Read this in the Rao Sahib's ear, and speak of my diligence and zeal, that favour may not be abated by absence, and keep the eye of constraint upon that jesting dog without teeth—Bahadur Shah—for by thy aid and voice, and what I have done in regard to the guns, I look, as thou knowest, for the headship of the army of Jagesur. That conscienceless one desires it also, and I have heard that the Rao Sahib leans thatward. Have ye done, then, with the drinking of wine in your house, my brother, or

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has Bahadur Shah become a forswearer of brandy? I would not that drink should end him; but the well-mixed draught leads to madness. Consider.

And now in regard to this land of the Sahibs, follows that thou hast demanded. God is my witness that I have striven to understand all that I saw and a little of what I heard. My words and intention are those of truth, yet it may be that I write of nothing but lies.

Since the first wonder and bewilderment of my beholding is gone—we note the jewels in the ceiling-dome, but later the filth on the floor—I see clearly that this town, London, which is as large as all Jagesur, is accursed, being dark and unclean, devoid of sun, and full of low-born, who are perpetually drunk, and howl in the streets like jackals, men and women together. At nightfall it is the custom of countless thousands of women to descend into the streets and sweep them, roaring, making jests, and demanding liquor. At the hour of this attack it is the custom of the householders to take their wives and children to the playhouses and the places of entertainment; evil and good thus returning home together as do kine from the pools at sundown. I have never seen any sight like this sight in all the world, and I doubt if a double is to be found on the hither side of the gates of Hell. Touching the mystery of their craft, it is an ancient one, but the householders assemble in herds, being men and women, and cry aloud to their God that it is not there; the said women pounding at the doors without. Moreover, upon the day when they go to prayer the drink-places are only opened when the mosques are shut; as who should dam the Jumna river for Friday only. Therefore the men and women, being forced to accomplish their desires in the shorter space, become the more furi-

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ously drunk, and roll in the gutter together. They are there regarded by those going to pray. Further, and for visible sign that the place is forgotten of God, there falls upon certain days, without warning, a cold darkness, whereby the sun's light is altogether cut off from all the city, and the people, male and female, and the drivers of the vehicles, grope and howl in this Pit at high noon, none seeing the other. The air being filled with the smoke of Hell—sulphur and pitch as it is written—they die speedily with gaspings, and so are buried in the dark. This is a terror beyond the pen, but, by my head, I write of what I have seen!

It is not true that the Sahibs worship one God, as do we of the Faith, or that the differences in their creed be like those now running between Shiah and Sunni. I am but a fighting man, and no darvesh, caring, as thou knowest, as much for Shiah as Sunni. But I have spoken to many people of the nature of their Gods. One there is who is the head of the Mukht-i-Fauj,¹ and he is worshipped by men in blood-red clothes, who shout and become without sense. Another is an image, before whom they burn candles and incense in just such a place as I have seen when I went to Rangoon to buy Burma ponies for the Rao. Yet a third has naked altars facing a great assembly of dead. To him they sing chiefly; and for others there is a woman who was the mother of the great prophet that was before Mahommed. The common folk have no God, but worship those who may speak to them hanging from the lamps in the street. The most wise people worship themselves and such things as they have made with their mouths and their hands,

¹Salvation Army.

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and this is to be found notably among the barren women, of whom there are many. It is the custom of men and women to make for themselves such God as they desire; pinching and patting the very soft clay of their thought into the acceptable mould of their lusts. So each is furnished with a Godling after his own heart; and this Godling is changed in a little, as the stomach turns or the health is altered. Thou wilt not believe this tale, my brother. Nor did I when I was first told, but now it is nothing to me; so greatly has the foot of travel let out the stirrup-holes of belief.

But thou wilt say, 'What matter to us whether Ahmed's beard or Mahmud's be the longer! Speak what thou canst of the Accomplishment of Desire.' Would that thou wert here to talk face to face and walk abroad with me and learn.

To this people it is a matter of Heaven and Hell whether Ahmed's beard and Mahmud's tally or differ but by a hair. Thou knowest the system of their statecraft? It is this. Certain men, appointing themselves, go about and speak to the low-born, the peasants, the leather-workers, and the cloth-dealers, and the women, saying: 'Give us leave by your favour to speak for you in the council.' Securing that permission by large promises, they return to the council-place, and, sitting unarmed, some six hundred together, speak at random each for himself and his own ball of low-born. The viziers and dewans of the Empress must ever beg money at their hands, for unless more than a half of the six hundred be of one heart towards the spending of the revenues, neither horse can be shod, rifle loaded; nor man clothed throughout the land. Remember this very continually. The six hundred are above the Empress, above the Vice-

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roy of India, above the Head of the Army and every other power that thou hast ever known. Because they hold the revenues.

They are divided into two hordes—the one perpetually hurling abuse at the other, and bidding the low-born hamper and rebel against all that the other may devise for government. Except that they are unarmed, and so call each other liar, dog, and bastard without fear, even under the shadow of the Empress's throne, they are at bitter war which is without any end. They put lie against lie, till the low-born and common folk grow drunk with lies, and in their turn begin to lie and refuse to pay the revenues. Further, they divide their women into bands, and send them into this fight with yellow flowers in their hands, and since the belief of a woman is but her lover's belief stripped of judgment, very many wild words are added. Well said the slave-girl to Mammun in the delectable pages of the Son of Abdullah:—

‘Oppression and the sword slay fast—
Thy breath kills slowly but at last.’

If they desire a thing they declare that it is true. If they desire it not, though that were Death itself, they cry aloud, ‘It has never been.’ Thus their talk is the talk of children, and like children they snatch at what they covet, not considering whether it is their own or another's. And in their councils, when the army of unreason has come to the defile of dispute, and there is no more talk left on either side, they, dividing, count heads, and the will of that side which has the larger number of heads makes that law. But the outnumbered side run speedily among the common people and bid them tram-

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ple on that law, and slay the officers thereof. Follows slaughter by night of men unarmed, and the slaughter of cattle and insults to women. They do not cut off the noses of women, but they crop their hair and scrape the flesh with pins. Then those shameless ones of the council stand up before the judges wiping their mouths and making oath. They say: 'Before God we are free from blame. Did we say, "Heave that stone out of that road and kill that one and no other"?' So they are not made shorter by the head because they said only: 'Here are stones and yonder is such a fellow obeying the Law which is no law because we do not desire it.'

Read this in the Rao Sahib's ear, and ask him if he remembers that season when the Manglot headmen refused revenue, not because they could not pay, but because they judged the cess extreme. I and thou went out with the troopers all one day, and the black lances raised the thatch, so that there was hardly any need of firing; and no man was slain. But this land is at secret war and veiled killing. In five years of peace they have slain within their own borders and of their own kin more men than would have fallen had the ball of dissension been left to the mallet of the army. And yet there is no hope of peace, for soon the sides again divide, and then they will cause to be slain more men unarmed and in the fields. And so much for that matter, which is to our advantage. There is a better thing to be told, and one tending to the Accomplishment of Desire. Read here with a fresh mind after sleep. I write as I understand.

Above all this war without honour lies that which I find hard to put into writing, and thou knowest I am unhandy of the pen. I will ride the steed of Inability sideways at the wall of Expression. The earth under

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foot is sick and sour with the much handling of man, as a grazing ground sours under cattle; and the air is sick too. Upon the ground they have laid in this town, as it were, the stinking boards of a stable, and through these boards, between a thousand thousand houses, the rank humours of the earth sweat through to the over-burdened air that returns them to their breeding-place; for the smoke of their cooking fires keeps all in as the cover the juices of the sheep. And in like manner there is a green sickness among the people, and especially among the six hundred men who talk. Neither winter nor autumn abates that malady of the soul. I have seen it among women in our own country, and in boys not yet blooded to the sword; but I have never seen so much thereof before. Through the peculiar operation of this thing the people, abandoning honour and steadfastness, question all authority, not as men question, but as girls, whimperingly, with pinching in the back when the back is turned, and mowing. If one cries in the streets, 'There has been an injustice,' they take him not to make complaint to those appointed, but all who pass, drinking his words, fly clamorously to the house of the accused and write evil things of him, his wives and his daughters; for they take no thought to the weighing of evidence, but are as women. And with one hand they beat their constables who guard the streets, and with the other beat the constables for resenting that beating, and fine them. When they have in all things made light of the State they cry to the State for help, and it is given, so that the next time they will cry more. Such as are oppressed riot through the streets, bearing banners that hold four days' labour and a week's bread in cost and toil; and when neither horse nor foot can pass by they are satis-

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fied. Others receiving wages, refuse to work till they get more, and the priests help them, and also men of the six hundred—for where rebellion is, one of those men will come as a kite to a dead bullock—and priests, talker, and men together declare that it is right because these will not work that no others may attempt. In this manner they have so confused the loading and the unloading of the ships that come to this town that, in sending the Rao Sahib's guns and harness, I saw fit to send the cases by the train to another ship that sailed from another place. There is now no certainty in any sending. But who injures the merchants shuts the door of well-being on the city and the army. And ye know what Sa'adi saith:—

‘How may the merchant westward fare
When he hears the tale of the tumults there?’

No man can keep faith, because he cannot tell how his underlings will go. They have made the servant greater than the master, for that he is the servant; not reckoning that each is equal under God to the appointed task. That is a thing to be put aside in the cupboard of the mind.

Further, the misery and outcry of the common folk of whom the earth's bosom is weary has so wrought upon the minds of certain people who have never slept under fear nor seen the flat edge of the sword on the heads of a mob, that they cry out: ‘Let us abate everything that is, and altogether labour with our bare hands.’ Their hands in that employ would fester at the second stroke; and I have seen, for all their unrest at the agonies of others, they abandon no whit of soft living. Unknow-

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ing the common folk, or indeed the minds of men, they offer strong drink of words, such as they themselves use, to empty bellies; and that wine breeds drunkenness of soul. The distressful persons stand all day long at the door of the drink-places to the number of very many thousands. The well-wishing people of small discernment give them words or pitifully attempt in schools to turn them into craftsmen, weavers, or builders, of whom there be more than enough. Yet they have not the wisdom to look at the hands of the taught, whereon a man's craft and that of his father is written by God and Necessity. They believe that the son of a drunkard shall drive a straight chisel and the charioteer do plaster-work. They take no thought in the dispensation of generosity, which is as the closed fingers of a water-scooping palm. Therefore the rough timber of a very great army drifts unhewn through the slime of their streets. If the Government, which is to-day and to-morrow changes, spent on these hopeless ones some money to clothe and equip, I should not write what I write. But these people despise the trade of arms, and rest content with the memory of old battles; the women and the talking men aiding them.

Thou wilt say: 'Why speak continually of women and fools?' I answer by God, the Fashioner of the Heart, the fools sit among the six hundred, and the women sway their councils. Hast thou forgotten when the order came across the seas that rotted out the armies of the English with us, so that soldiers fell sick by the hundred where but ten had sickened before? That was the work of not more than twenty of the men and some fifty of the barren women. I have seen three or four of them, male and female, and they triumph openly, in the name of their God, because three regiments of the white troops

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are not. This is to our advantage; because the sword with the rust-spot breaks over the turban of the enemy. But if they thus tear their own flesh and blood ere their madness be risen to its height, what will they do when the moon is full?

Seeing that power lay in the hands of the six hundred, and not in the Viceroy or elsewhere, I have throughout my stay sought the shadow of those among them who talk most and most extravagantly. They lead the common folk, and receive permission from their good-will. It is the desire of some of these men—indeed, of almost as many as caused the rotting of the English army—that our lands and peoples should accurately resemble those of the English upon this very day. May God, the Contemner of Folly, forbid! I myself am accounted a show among them, and of us and ours they know naught, some calling me Hindu and others Rajput, and using towards me, in ignorance, slave-talk and expressions of great disrespect. Some of them are well-born, but the greater part are low-born, coarse-skinned, waving their arms, high-voiced, without dignity, slack in the mouth, shiftily-eyed, and, as I have said, swayed by the wind of a woman's cloak.

Now this is a tale but two days old. There was a company at meat, and a high-voiced woman spoke to me, in the face of the men, of the affairs of our womankind. It was her ignorance that made each word an edged insult. Remembering this I held my peace till she had spoken a new law as to the control of our zenanas, and all who are behind the curtains.

Then I—‘Hast thou ever felt the life stir under thy heart or laid a little son between thy breasts, O most unhappy?’ Thereto she hotly, with a haggard eye—‘No,

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for I am a free woman, and no servant of babes.' Then I softly—'God deal lightly with thee, my sister, for thou art in heavier bondage than any slave, and the fuller half of the earth is hidden from thee. The first ten years of the life of a man are his mother's, and from the dusk to the dawn surely the wife may command the husband. Is it a great thing to stand back in the waking hours while the men go abroad unhampered by thy hands on the bridle-rein?' Then she wondered that a heathen should speak thus: yet she is a woman honoured among these men, and openly professes that she hath no profession of faith in her mouth. Read this in the ear of the Rao Sahib, and demand how it would fare with me if I brought such a woman for his use. It were worse than that yellow desert-bred girl from Cutch, who set the girls to fighting for her own pleasure, and slipped the young prince across the mouth. Rememberest thou?

In truth the fountain-head of power is putrid with long standing still. These men and women would make of all India a dung-cake, and would fain leave the mark of the fingers upon it. And they have power and the control of the revenues, and that is why I am so particular in description. They have power over all India. Of what they speak they understand nothing, for the low-born's soul is bounded by his field, and he grasps not the connection of affairs from pole to pole. They boast openly that the Viceroy and the others are their servants. When the masters are mad, what shall the servants do?

Some hold that all war is sin, and Death the greatest fear under God. Others declare with the Prophet that it is evil to drink, to which teaching their streets bear evident witness; and others there are, specially the low-

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born, who aver that all dominion is wicked and sovereignty of the sword accursed. These protested to me, making, as it were, an excuse that their kin should hold Hindustan, and hoping that upon a day they will depart. Knowing well the breed of white man in our borders I would have laughed, but forbore, remembering that these speakers had power in the counting of heads. Yet others cry aloud against the taxation of Hindustan under the Sahib's rule. To this I assent, remembering the yearly mercy of the Rao Sahib when the turbans of the troopers come through the blighted corn, and the women's anklets go into the melting-pot. But I am no good speaker. That is the duty of the boys from Bengal—hill asses with an eastern bray—Mahrattas from Poona, and the like. These, moving among fools, represent themselves as the sons of some one, being beggar-taught offspring of grain-dealers, curriers, sellers of bottles, and money-lenders, as thou knowest. Now, we of Jagesur owe naught save friendship to the English, who took us by the sword, and having taken us let us go, assuring the Rao Sahib's succession for all time. But these base-born, having won their learning through the mercy of the Government, attired in English clothes, forswearing the faith of their fathers for gain, spread rumour and debate against the Government, and are, therefore, very dear to certain of the six hundred. I have heard these cattle speak as princes and rulers of men, and I have laughed; but not altogether.

Once it happened that a son of some grain-bag sat with me at meat, who was arrayed and speaking after the manner of the English. At each mouthful he committed perjury against the Salt that he had eaten; the men and women applauding. When, craftily falsifying, he had

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magnified oppression and invented untold wrong, together with the desecration of his tun-bellied gods, he demanded in the name of his people the government of all our land, and turning, laid palm to my shoulder, saying—‘Here is one who is with us, albeit he professes another faith; he will bear out my words.’ This he delivered in English, and, as it were, exhibited me to that company. Preserving a smiling countenance, I answered in our own tongue—‘Take away that hand, man without a father, or the folly of these folk shall not save thee, nor my silence guard thy reputation. Sit off, herd.’ And in their speech I said—‘He speaks truth. When the favour and wisdom of the English allows us yet a little larger share in the burden and the reward, the Musulman will deal with the Hindu.’ He alone saw what was in my heart. I was merciful towards him because he was accomplishing our desires; but remember that his father is one Durga Charan Laha, in Calcutta. Lay thy hand upon his shoulder if ever chance sends. It is not good that bottle-dealers and auctioneers should paw the sons of princes. I walk abroad sometimes with the man that all this world may know the Hindu and Musulman are one, but when we come to the unfrequented streets I bid him walk behind me, and that is sufficient honour.

And why did I eat dirt?

Thus, my brother, it seems to my heart, which has almost burst in the consideration of these matters. The Bengalis and the beggar-taught boys know well that the Sahib’s power to govern comes neither from the Viceroy nor the head of the army, but from the hands of the six hundred in this town, and peculiarly those who talk most. They will therefore yearly address themselves

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more and more to that protection, and working on the green-sickness of the land, as has ever been their custom, will in time cause, through the perpetually instigated interference of the six hundred, the hand of the Indian Government to become inoperative, so that no measure nor order may be carried through without clamour and argument on their part; for that is the delight of the English at this hour. Have I overset the bounds of possibility? No. Even thou must have heard that one of the six hundred, having neither knowledge, fear, nor reverence before his eyes, has made in sport a new and a written scheme for the government of Bengal, and openly shows it abroad as a king might read his crowning proclamation. And this man, meddling in affairs of State, speaks in the council for an assemblage of leather-dressers, makers of boots and harness, and openly glories in that he has no God. Has either minister of the Empress, Empress, Viceroy, or any other raised a voice against this leather-man? Is not his power therefore to be sought, and that of his like-thinkers withit? Thou seest.

The telegraph is the servant of the six hundred, and all the Sahibs in India, omitting not one, are the servants of the telegraph. Yearly, too, thou knowest, the beggar-taught will hold that which they call their Congress, first at one place and then at another, leavening Hindustan with rumour, echoing the talk among the low-born people here, and demanding that they, like the six hundred, control the revenues. And they will bring every point and letter over the heads of the Governors and the Lieutenant-Governors, and whoever hold authority, and cast it clamorously at the feet of the six hundred here; and certain of those word-confounders and the barren

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women will assent to their demands, and others will weary of disagreement. Thus fresh confusion will be thrown into the councils of the Empress even as the island near by is helped and comforted into the smothered war of which I have written. Then yearly, as they have begun and we have seen, the low-born men of the six hundred anxious for honour will embark for our land, and, staying a little while, will gather round them and fawn before the beggar-taught, and these departing from their side will assuredly inform the peasants, and the fighting men for whom there is no employ, that there is a change toward and a coming of help from over the seas. That rumour will not grow smaller in the spreading. And, most of all, the Congress, when it is not under the eye of the six hundred—who, though they foment dissension and death, pretend great reverence for the law which is no law—will, stepping aside, deliver uneasy words to the peasants, speaking, as it has done already, of the remission of taxation, and promising a new rule. That is to our advantage, but the flower of danger is in the seed of it. Thou knowest what evil a rumour may do; though in the Black Year when thou and I were young our standing to the English brought gain to Jagesur and enlarged our borders, for the Government gave us land on both sides. Of the Congress itself nothing is to be feared that ten troopers could not remove; but if its words too soon perturb the minds of those waiting or of princes in idleness, a flame may come before the time, and since there are now many white hands to quench it, all will return to the former condition. If the flame be kept under, we need have no fear, because, sweating and panting, the one trampling on the other, the white people here are digging their own graves. The hand of the Viceroy will

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be tied, the hearts of the Sahibs will be downcast, and all eyes will turn to England disregarding any orders. Meantime, keeping tally on the sword-hilt against the hour when the score must be made smooth by the blade, it is well for us to assist and greatly befriend the Bengali that he may get control of the revenues and the posts. We must even write to England that we be of one blood with the school-men. It is not long to wait; by my head it is not long! This people are like the great king Ferisht, who, eaten with the scabs of long idleness, plucked off his crown and danced naked among the dunghills. But I have not forgotten the profitable end of that tale. The vizier set him upon a horse and led him into battle. Presently his health returned and he caused to be engraven on the crown:—

‘Though I was cast away by the king,
Yet, through God, I returned and he added to my brilliance
Two great rubies (Balkh and Iran).’

If this people be purged and bled out by battle, their sickness may go and their eyes be cleared to the necessities of things. But they are now far gone in rottenness. Even the stallion, too long heel-roped, forgets how to fight; and these men are mules. I do not lie when I say that unless they are bled and taught with the whip, they will hear and obey all that is said by the Congress and the black men here, hoping to turn our land into their own orderless Jehannum. For the men of the six hundred, being chiefly low-born and unused to authority, desire much to exercise rule, extending their arms to the sun and moon, and shouting very greatly in order to

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hear the echo of their voices, each one saying some new strange thing, and parting the goods and honour of others among the rapacious, that he may obtain the favour of the common folk. And all this is to our advantage.

Therefore write, that they may read, of gratitude and of love and the law. I myself, when I return, will show how the dish should be dressed to take the taste here; for it is here that we must come. Cause to be established in Jagesur a newspaper, and fill it with translations of their papers. A beggar-taught may be brought from Calcutta for thirty rupees a month, and if he writes in Gurmukhi our people cannot read. Create, further, councils other than the panchayats of headmen, village by village and district by district, instructing them beforehand what to say according to the order of the Rao. Print all these things in a book in English, and send it to this place, and to every man of the six hundred. Bid the beggar-taught write in front of all that Jagesur follows fast on the English plan. If thou squeezest the Hindu shrine at Theegkot, and it is ripe, remit the head-tax, and perhaps the marriage-tax, with great publicity. But above all things keep the troops ready, and in good pay, even though we glean the stubble with the wheat and stint the Rao Sahib's women. All must go softly. Protest thou thy love for the voice of the common people in all things, and affect to despise the troops. That shall be taken for a witness in this land. The headship of the troops must be mine. See that Bahadur Shah's wits go wandering over the wine, but do not send him to God. I am an old man, but I may yet live to lead.

If this people be not bled out and regain strength, we, watching how the tide runs, when we see that the shadow of their hand is all but lifted from Hindustan, must

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bid the Bengali demand the removal of the residue or set going an uneasiness to that end. We must have a care neither to hurt the life of the Englishmen nor the honour of their women, for in that case six times the six hundred here could not hold those who remain from making the land swim. We must care that they are not mobbed by the Bengalis, but honourably escorted, while the land is held down with the threat of the sword if a hair of their heads fall. Thus we shall gain a good name, and when rebellion is unaccompanied by bloodshed, as has lately befallen in a far country, the English, disregarding honour, call it by a new name: even one who has been a minister of the Empress, but is now at war against the law, praises it openly before the common folk. So greatly are they changed since the days of Nikhal Seyn!¹ And then, if all go well and the Sahibs who through continual checking and browbeating will have grown sick at heart, see themselves abandoned by their kin—for this people have allowed their greatest to die on dry sand through delay and fear of expense—we may go forward. This people are swayed by names. A new name, therefore, must be given to the rule of Hindustan (and that the Bengalis may settle among themselves), and there will be many writings and oaths of love, such as the little island over seas makes when it would fight more bitterly; and after that the residue are diminished the hour comes, and we must strike so that the sword is never any more questioned.

By the favour of God and the conservation of the Sahibs these many years, Hindustan contains very much plunder, which we can in no way eat hurriedly. There

¹Nicholson, a gentleman once of some notoriety in India.

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will be to our hand the scaffolding of the house of State, for the Bengali shall continue to do our work, and must account to us for the revenue, and learn his seat in the order of things. Whether the Hindu kings of the west will break in to share that spoil before we have swept it altogether, thou knowest better than I; but be certain that, then, strong hands will seek their own thrones, and it may be that the days of the king of Delhi will return if we only, curbing our desires, pay due obedience to the outward appearances and the names. Thou rememberest the old song—

‘Hadst thou not called it Love, I had said it were a drawn sword,
But since thou hast spoken, I believe and—I die.’

It is in my heart that there will remain in our land a few Sahibs undesirous of returning to England. These we must cherish and protect, that by their skill and cunning we may hold together and preserve unity in time of war. The Hindu kings will never trust a Sahib in the core of their counsels. I say again that if we of the Faith confide in them, we shall trample upon our enemies.

Is all this a dream to thee, gray fox of my mother’s bearing? I have written of what I have seen and heard, but from the same clay two men will never fashion platters alike, nor from the same facts draw equal conclusions. Once more, there is a green-sickness upon all the people of this country. They eat dirt even now to stay their cravings. Honour and stability have departed from their councils, and the knife of dissension has brought down upon their heads the flapping tent-flies of confusion. The Empress is old. They speak disre-

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spectfully of her and hers in the street. They despise the sword, and believe that the tongue and the pen sway all. The measure of their ignorance and their soft belief is greater than the measure of the wisdom of Solomon, the son of David. All these things I have seen whom they regard as a wild beast and a spectacle. By God the Enlightener of Intelligence, if the Sahibs in India could breed sons who lived so that their houses might be established, I would almost fling my sword at the Viceroy's feet, saying: 'Let us here fight for a kingdom together, thine and mine, disregarding the babble across the water. Write a letter to England, saying that we love them, but would depart from their camps and make all clean under a new crown.' But the Sahibs die out at the third generation in our land, and it may be that I dream dreams. Yet not altogether. Until a white calamity of steel and bloodshed, the bearing of burdens, the trembling for life, and the hot rage of insult—for pestilence would unman them if eyes not unused to men see clear—befall this people, our path is safe. They are sick. The Fountain of Power is a gutter which all may defile; and the voices of the men are overborne by the squealings of mules and the whinnying of barren mares. If through adversity they become wise, then, my brother, strike with and for them, and later, when thou and I are dead, and the disease grows up again (the young men bred in the school of fear and trembling and word-confounding have yet to live out their appointed span), those who have fought on the side of the English may ask and receive what they choose. At present seek quietly to confuse, and delay, and evade, and make of no effect. In this business four score of the six hundred are our true helpers.

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Now the pen, and the ink, and the hand weary together, as thy eyes will weary in this reading. Be it known to my house that I return soon, but do not speak of the hour. Letters without name have come to me touching my honour. The honour of my house is thine. If they be, as I believe, the work of a dismissed groom, Futteh Lal, that ran at the tail of my wine-coloured Kathiawar stallion, his village is beyond Manglot; look to it that his tongue no longer lengthens itself on the names of those who are mine. If it be otherwise, put a guard upon my house till I come, and especially see that no sellers of jewellery, astrologers, or midwives have entrance to the women's rooms. We rise by our slaves, and by our slaves we fall, as it was said. To all who are of my remembrance I bring gifts according to their worth. I have written twice of the gift that I would cause to be given to Bahadur Shah.

The blessing of God and his Prophet on thee and thine till the end which is appointed. Give me felicity by informing me of the state of thy health. My head is at the Rao Sahib's feet; my sword is at his left side, a little above my heart. Follows my seal.

‘THE FINEST STORY IN THE WORLD’

(1891)

‘Or ever the knightly years were gone
With the old world to the grave,
I was a king in Babylon
And you were a Christian slave.’

W. E. Henley.

HIS name was Charlie Mears; he was the only son of his mother who was a widow, and he lived in the north of London, coming into the City every day to work in a bank. He was twenty years old and was full of aspirations. I met him in a public billiard-saloon where the marker called him by his first name, and he called the marker ‘Bullseye.’ Charlie explained a little nervously, that he had only come to the place to look on, and since looking on at games of skill is not a cheap amusement for the young, I suggested that Charlie should go back to his mother.

That was our first step towards better acquaintance. He would call on me sometimes in the evenings instead of running about London with his fellow-clerks; and before long, speaking of himself as a young man must, he told me of his aspirations, which were all literary. He desired to make himself an undying name chiefly through verse, though he was not above sending stories of love

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and death to the penny-in-the-slot journals. It was my fate to sit still while Charlie read me poems of many hundred lines, and bulky fragments of plays that would surely shake the world. My reward was his unreserved confidence, and the self-revelations and troubles of a young man are almost as holy as those of a maiden. Charlie had never fallen in love, but was anxious to do so on the first opportunity; he believed in all things good and all things honourable, but at the same time, was curiously careful to let me see that he knew his way about the world as befitted a bank-clerk on twenty-five shillings a week. He rhymed ‘dove’ with ‘love’ and ‘moon’ with ‘June,’ and devoutly believed that they had never so been rhymed before. The long lame gaps in his plays he filled up with hasty words of apology and description, and swept on, seeing all that he intended to do so clearly that he esteemed it already done, and turned to me for applause.

I fancy that his mother did not encourage his aspirations; and I know that his writing-table at home was the edge of his washstand. This he told me almost at the outset of our acquaintance—when he was ravaging my bookshelves, and a little before I was implored to speak the truth as to his chances of ‘writing something really great, you know.’ Maybe I encouraged him too much, for, one night, he called on me, his eyes flaming with excitement, and said breathlessly:

‘Do you mind—can you let me stay here and write all this evening? I won’t interrupt you, I won’t really. There’s no place for me to write in at my mother’s.’

‘What’s the trouble?’ I said, knowing well what that trouble was.

‘I’ve a notion in my head that would make the most

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splendid story that was ever written. Do let me write it out here. It's such a notion!

There was no resisting the appeal. I set him a table; he hardly thanked me, but plunged into his work at once. For half an hour the pen scratched without stopping. Then Charlie sighed and tugged his hair. The scratching grew slower, there were more erasures, and at last ceased. The finest story in the world would not come forth.

'It looks such awful rot now,' he said mournfully. 'And yet it seemed so good when I was thinking about it. What's wrong?'

I could not dishearten him by saying the truth. So I answered: 'Perhaps you don't feel in the mood for writing.'

'Yes I do—except when I look at this stuff. Ugh!'

'Read me what you've done,' I said.

He read, and it was wondrous bad, and he paused at all the specially turgid sentences, expecting a little approval; for he was proud of those sentences, as I knew he would be.

'It needs compression,' I suggested cautiously.

'I hate cutting my things down. I don't think you could alter a word here without spoiling the sense. It reads better aloud than when I was writing it.'

'Charlie, you're suffering from an alarming disease afflicting a numerous class. Put the thing by, and tackle it again in a week.'

'I want to do it at once. What do you think of it?'

'How can I judge from a half-written tale? Tell me the story as it lies in your head.'

Charlie told, and in the telling there was everything that his ignorance had so carefully prevented from es-

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caping into the written word. I looked at him, wondering whether it were possible that he did not know the originality, the power of the notion that had come in his way? It was distinctly a Notion among notions. Men had been puffed up with pride by ideas not a tithe as excellent and practicable. But Charlie babbled on serenely, interrupting the current of pure fancy with samples of horrible sentences that he purposed to use. I heard him out to the end. It would be folly to allow his thought to remain in his own inept hands, when I could do so much with it. Not all that could be done indeed; but, oh so much!

'What do you think?' he said at last. 'I fancy I shall call it "The Story of a Ship." '

'I think the idea's pretty good; but you won't be able to handle it for ever so long. Now I—'

'Would it be of any use to you? Would you care to take it? I should be proud,' said Charlie promptly.

There are few things sweeter in this world than the guileless, hot-headed, intemperate, open admiration of a junior. Even a woman in her blindest devotion does not fall into the gait of the man she adores, tilt her bonnet to the angle at which he wears his hat, or interlard her speech with his pet oaths. And Charlie did all these things. Still it was necessary to salve my conscience before I possessed myself of Charlie's thoughts.

'Let's make a bargain. I'll give you a fiver for the notion,' I said.

Charlie became a bank-clerk at once.

'Oh, that's impossible. Between two pals, you know, if I may call you so, and speaking as a man of the world, I couldn't. Take the notion if it's any use to you. I've heaps more.'

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He had—none knew this better than I—but they were the notions of other men.

‘Look at it as a matter of business—between men of the world,’ I returned. ‘Five pounds will buy you any number of poetry-books. Business is business, and you may be sure I shouldn’t give that price unless—’

‘Oh, if you put it that way,’ said Charlie, visibly moved by the thought of the books. The bargain was clinched with an agreement that he should at unstated intervals come to me with all the notions that he possessed, should have a table of his own to write at, and unquestioned right to inflict upon me all his poems and fragments of poems. Then I said, ‘Now tell me how you came by this idea.’

‘It came by itself.’ Charlie’s eyes opened a little.

‘Yes, but you told me a great deal about the hero that you must have read before somewhere.’

‘I haven’t any time for reading, except when you let me sit here, and on Sundays I’m on my bicycle or down the river all day. There’s nothing wrong about the hero, is there?’

‘Tell me again and I shall understand clearly. You say that your hero went pirating. How did he live?’

‘He was on the lower deck of this ship-thing that I was telling you about.’

‘What sort of ship?’

‘It was the kind rowed with oars, and the sea spurts through the oar-holes, and the men row sitting up to their knees in water. Then there’s a bench running down between the two lines of oars, and an overseer with a whip walks up and down the bench to make the men work.’

‘How do you know that?’

‘It’s in the tale. There’s a rope running overhead,

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looped to the upper deck, for the overseer to catch hold of when the ship rolls. When the overseer misses the rope once and falls among the rowers, remember the hero laughs at him and gets licked for it. He’s chained to his oar, of course—the hero.’

‘How is he chained?’

‘With an iron band round his waist fixed to the bench he sits on, and a sort of handcuff on his left wrist chaining him to the oar. He’s on the lower deck where the worst men are sent, and the only light comes from the hatchways and through the oar-holes. Can’t you imagine the sunlight just squeezing through between the handle and the hole and wobbling about as the ship moves?’

‘I can, but I can’t imagine your imagining it.’

‘How could it be any other way? Now you listen to me. The long oars on the upper deck are managed by four men to each bench, the lower ones by three, and the lowest of all by two. Remember it’s quite dark on the lowest deck and all the men there go mad. When a man dies at his oar on that deck he isn’t thrown overboard, but cut up in his chains and stuffed through the oar-hole in little pieces.’

‘Why?’ I demanded amazed, not so much at the information as the tone of command in which it was flung out.

‘To save trouble and to frighten the others. It needs two overseers to drag a man’s body up to the top deck; and if the men at the lower-deck oars were left alone, of course they’d stop rowing and try to pull up the benches by all standing up together in their chains.’

‘You’ve a most provident imagination. Where have you been reading about galleys and galley-slaves?’

‘Nowhere that I remember. I row a little when I get

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the chance. But, perhaps, if you say so, I may have read something.'

He went away shortly afterwards to deal with book-sellers, and I wondered how a bank-clerk aged twenty could put into my hands with a profligate abundance of detail, all given with absolute assurance, the story of extravagant and blood-thirsty adventure, riot, piracy, and death in unnamed seas. He had led his hero a desperate dance through revolt against the overseers, to command of a ship of his own, and at last to the establishment of a kingdom on an island 'somewhere in the sea, you know'; and, delighted with my paltry five pounds, had gone out to buy the notions of other men, that these might teach him how to write. I had the consolation of knowing that this notion was mine by right of purchase, and I thought that I could make something of it.

When next he came to me he was drunk—royally drunk on many poets for the first time revealed to him. His pupils were dilated, his words tumbled over each other, and he wrapped himself in quotations—as a beggar would enfold himself in the purple of emperors. Most of all was he drunk with Longfellow.

'Isn't it splendid? Isn't it superb?' he cried, after hasty greetings. 'Listen to this—

“Wouldst thou,”—so the helmsman answered,

“Know the secret of the sea?

Only those who brave its dangers

Comprehend its mystery.”

By gum!

“Only those who brave its dangers

Comprehend its mystery.” ’

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he repeated twenty times, walking up and down the room and forgetting me. ‘But I can understand it too,’ he said to himself. ‘I don’t know how to thank you for that fiver. And this; listen—

‘ “I remember the black wharves and the slips
And the sea-tides tossing free;
And the Spanish sailors with bearded lips,
And the beauty and mystery of the ships,
And the magic of the sea.”

I haven’t braved any dangers, but I feel as if I knew all about it.’

‘You certainly seem to have a grip of the sea. Have you ever seen it?’

‘When I was a little chap I went to Brighton once; we used to live in Coventry, though, before we came to London. I never saw it,

‘ “When descends on the Atlantic
The gigantic
Storm-wind of the Equinox.” ’

He shook me by the shoulder to make me understand the passion that was shaking himself.

‘When that storm comes,’ he continued, ‘I think that all the oars in the ship that I was talking about get broken, and the rowers have their chests smashed in by the oar-heads bucking. By the way, have you done anything with that notion of mine yet?’

‘No. I was waiting to hear more of it from you. Tell me how in the world you’re so certain about the fittings of the ship. You know nothing of ships.’

‘I don’t know. It’s as real as anything to me until I

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try to write it down. I was thinking about it only last night in bed, after you had lent me "Treasure Island"; and I made up a whole lot of new things to go into the story.'

'What sort of things?'

'About the food the men ate; rotten figs and black beans and wine in a skin bag, passed from bench to bench.'

'Was the ship built so long ago as that?'

'As what? I don't know whether it was long ago or not. It's only a notion, but sometimes it seems just as real as if it was true. Do I bother you with talking about it?'

'Not in the least. Did you make up anything else?'

'Yes, but it's nonsense.' Charlie flushed a little.

'Never mind; let's hear about it.'

'Well, I was thinking over the story, and after awhile I got out of bed and wrote down on a piece of paper the sort of stuff the men might be supposed to scratch on their oars with the edges of their handcuffs. It seemed to make the thing more life-like. It is so real to me, y'know.'

'Have you the paper on you?'

'Ye—es, but what's the use of showing it? It's only a lot of scratches. All the same, we might have 'em reproduced in the book on the front page.'

'I'll attend to those details. Show me what your men wrote.'

He pulled out of his pocket a sheet of notepaper, with a single line of scratches upon it, and I put this carefully away.

'What is it supposed to mean in English?' I said.

'Oh, I don't know. I mean it to mean "I'm beastly

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tired.” It’s great nonsense,’ he repeated, ‘but all those men in the ship seem as real as real people to me. Do do something to the notion soon; I should like to see it written and printed.’

‘But all you’ve told me would make a long book.’

‘Make it then. You’ve only to sit down and write it out.’

‘Give me a little time. Have you any more notions?’

‘Not just now. I’m reading all the books I’ve bought. They’re splendid.’

When he had left I looked at the sheet of notepaper with the inscription upon it. Then I took my head tenderly between both hands, to make certain that it was not coming off or turning round. Then . . . but there seemed to be no interval between quitting my rooms and finding myself arguing with a policeman outside a door marked ‘Private’ in a corridor of the British Museum. All I demanded, as politely as possible, was ‘the Greek antiquity man.’ The policeman knew nothing except the rules of the Museum, and it became necessary to forage through all the houses and offices inside the gates. An elderly gentleman called away from his lunch put an end to my search by holding the notepaper between finger and thumb and sniffing at it scornfully.

‘What does this mean? H’mmm,’ said he. ‘So far as I can ascertain it is an attempt to write extremely corrupt Greek on the part’—here he glared at me with intention—‘of an extremely illiterate—ah—person.’ He read slowly from the paper, ‘Pollock, Erckmann, Tauchnitz, Henniker’—four names familiar to me.

‘Can you tell me what the corruption is supposed to mean—the gist of the thing?’ I asked.

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“I have been—many times—overcome with weariness in this particular employment.” That is the meaning.’ He returned me the paper, and I fled without a word of thanks, explanation, or apology.

I might have been excused for forgetting much. To me of all men had been given the chance to write the most marvellous tale in the world, nothing less than the story of a Greek galley-slave, as told by himself. Small wonder that his dreaming had seemed real to Charlie. The Fates that are so careful to shut the doors of each successive life behind us had, in this case, been neglectful, and Charlie was looking, though that he did not know, where never man had been permitted to look with full knowledge since Time began. Above all, he was absolutely ignorant of the knowledge sold to me for five pounds; and he would retain that ignorance, for bank-clerks do not understand metempsychosis, and a sound commercial education does not include Greek. He would supply me—here I capered among the dumb gods of Egypt and laughed in their battered faces—with material to make my tale sure—so sure that the world would hail it as an impudent and vamped fiction. And I—I alone would know that it was absolutely and literally true. I—I alone held this jewel to my hand for the cutting and polishing! Therefore I danced again among the gods of the Egyptian court till a policeman saw me and took steps in my direction.

It remained now only to encourage Charlie to talk, and here there was no difficulty. But I had forgotten those accursed books of poetry. He came to me time after time, as useless as a surcharged phonograph—drunk on Byron, Shelley, or Keats. Knowing now what the boy had been in his past lives, and desperately anxious

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not to lose one word of his babble, I could not hide from him my respect and interest. He misconstrued both into respect for the present soul of Charlie Mears, to whom life was as new as it was to Adam, and interest in his readings; and stretched my patience to breaking point by reciting poetry—not his own now, but that of others. I wished every English poet blotted out of the memory of mankind. I blasphemed the mightiest names of song because they had drawn Charlie from the path of direct narrative, and would, later, spur him to imitate them; but I choked down my impatience until the first flood of enthusiasm should have spent itself and the boy returned to his dreams.

‘What’s the use of my telling you what I think, when these chaps wrote things for the angels to read?’ he growled, one evening. ‘Why don’t you write something like theirs?’

‘I don’t think you’re treating me quite fairly,’ I said, speaking under strong restraint.

‘I’ve given you the story,’ he said shortly, replunging into ‘Lara.’

‘But I want the details.’

‘The things I make up about that damned ship that you call a galley? They’re quite easy. You can just make ’em up for yourself. Turn up the gas a little, I want to go on reading.’

I could have broken the gas globe over his head for his amazing stupidity. I could indeed make up things for myself did I only know what Charlie did not know that he knew. But since the doors were shut behind me I could only wait his youthful pleasure and strive to keep him in good temper. One minute’s want of guard might spoil a priceless revelation: now and again he would

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toss his books aside—he kept them in my rooms, for his mother would have been shocked at the waste of good money had she seen them—and launched into his sea-dreams. Again I cursed all the poets of England. The plastic mind of the bank-clerk had been overlaid, coloured, and distorted by that which he had read, and the result as delivered was a confused tangle of other voices most like the mutter and hum through a City telephone in the busiest part of the day.

He talked of the galley—his own galley had he but known it—with illustrations borrowed from ‘The Bride of Abydos.’ He pointed the experiences of his hero with quotations from ‘The Corsair,’ and threw in deep and desperate moral reflections from ‘Cain’ and ‘Manfred,’ expecting me to use them all. Only when the talk turned on Longfellow were the jarring cross-currents dumb, and I knew that Charlie was speaking the truth as he remembered it.

‘What do you think of this?’ I said one evening, as soon as I understood the medium in which his memory worked best, and, before he could expostulate, read him nearly the whole of ‘The Saga of King Olaf’!

He listened open-mouthed, flushed, his hands drumming on the back of the sofa where he lay, till I came to the Song of Einar Tamberskelver and the verse:—

‘Einar then, the arrow taking
From the loosened string,
Answered, “That was Norway breaking
’Neath thy hand, O King.”’

He gasped with pure delight of sound.

‘That’s better than Byron, a little?’ I ventured.

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‘Better! Why it’s true! How could he have known?’
I went back and repeated:—

“‘What was that?’ said Olaf, standing
On the quarter-deck,
“Something heard I like the stranding
Of a shattered wreck.””

‘How could he have known how the ships crash and the oars rip out and go “z-zzp” all along the line? Why only the other night . . . But go back, please, and read “The Skerry of Shrieks” again.’

‘No, I’m tired. Let’s talk. What happened the other night?’

‘I had an awful dream about that galley of ours. I dreamed I was drowned in a fight. You see we ran alongside another ship in harbour. The water was dead still except where our oars whipped it up. You know where I always sit in the galley?’ He spoke haltingly at first, under a fine English fear of being laughed at.

‘No. That’s news to me,’ I answered meekly, my heart beginning to beat.

‘On the fourth oar from the bow on the right side on the upper deck. There were four of us at that oar, all chained. I remember watching the water and trying to get my handcuffs off before the row began. Then we closed up on the other ship, and all their fighting men jumped over our bulwarks, and my bench broke and I was pinned down with the three other fellows on top of me, and the big oar jammed across our backs.’

‘Well?’ Charlie’s eyes were alive and alight. He was looking at the wall behind my chair.

‘I don’t know how we fought. The men were tram-

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pling all over my back, and I lay low. Then our rowers on the left side—tied to their oars, you know—began to yell and back water. I could hear the water sizzle, and we spun round like a cockchafer, and I knew, lying where I was, that there was a galley coming up bow-on to ram us on the left side. I could just lift up my head and see her sail over the bulwarks. We wanted to meet her bow to bow, but it was too late. We could only turn a little bit because the galley on our right had hooked herself on to us and stopped our moving. Then, by gum! there was a crash! Our left oars began to break as the other galley, the moving one y'know, stuck her nose into them. Then the lower-deck oars shot up through the deck planking, butt first, and one of them jumped clear up into the air and came down again close at my head.'

'How was that managed?'

'The moving galley's bow was plunking them back through their own oar-holes, and I could hear no end of a shindy on the decks below. Then her nose caught us nearly in the middle, and we tilted sideways, and the fellows in the right-hand galley unhitched their hooks and ropes, and threw things on to our upper deck—arrows, and hot pitch or something that stung, and we went up and up and up on the left side, and the right side dipped, and I twisted my head round and saw the water stand still as it topped the right bulwarks. Then it curled over and crashed down on the whole lot of us on the right side, and I felt it hit my back, and I woke.'

'One minute, Charlie. When the sea topped the bulwarks, what did it look like?' I had my reasons for asking. A man of my acquaintance had once gone down with a leaking ship in a still sea, and had seen the water-level pause for an instant ere it fell on the deck.

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‘It looked just like a banjo-string drawn tight, and it seemed to stay there for years,’ said Charlie.

Exactly! The other man had said: ‘It looked like a silver wire laid down along the bulwarks, and I thought it was never going to break.’ He had paid everything except the bare life for this little valueless piece of knowledge, and I had travelled ten thousand weary miles to meet him and take his knowledge at second hand. But Charlie, the bank-clerk on twenty-five shillings a week, who had never been out of sight of a made road, knew it all. It was no consolation to me that once in his lives he had been forced to die for his gains. I also must have died scores of times, but behind me, because I could have used my knowledge, the doors were shut.

‘And then?’ I said, trying to put away the devil of envy.

‘The funny thing was, though, in all the row I didn’t feel a bit astonished or frightened. It seemed as if I’d been in a good many fights, because I told my next man so when the row began. But that cad of an overseer on my deck wouldn’t unloose our chains and give us a chance. He always said that we’d all be set free after a battle, but we never were—we never were.’ Charlie shook his head mournfully.

‘What a scoundrel!’

‘I should say he was! He never gave us enough to eat, and sometimes we were so thirsty that we used to drink salt-water. I can taste that salt-water still.’

‘Now tell me something about the harbour where the fight was fought.’

‘I didn’t dream about that. I know it was a harbour, though; because we were tied up to a ring on a white wall and all the face of the stone under water was covered

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with wood to prevent our ram getting chipped when the tide made us rock.'

'That's curious. Our hero commanded the galley, didn't he?'

'Didn't he just! He stood by the bows and shouted like a good 'un. He was the man who killed the overseer.'

'But you were all drowned together, Charlie, weren't you?'

'I can't make that fit quite,' he said, with a puzzled look. 'The galley must have gone down with all hands, and yet I fancy that the hero went on living afterwards. Perhaps he climbed into the attacking ship. I wouldn't see that, of course. I was dead, you know.'

He shivered slightly and protested that he could remember no more.

I did not press him further, but to satisfy myself that he lay in ignorance of the workings of his own mind, deliberately introduced him to Mortimer Collins's 'Transmigration,' and gave him a sketch of the plot before he opened the pages.

'What rot it all is!' he said frankly, at the end of an hour. 'I don't understand his nonsense about the Red Planet Mars and the King, and the rest of it. Chuck me the Longfellow again.'

I handed him the book and wrote out as much as I could remember of his description of the sea-fight, appealing to him from time to time for confirmation of fact or detail. He would answer without raising his eyes from the book, as assuredly as though all his knowledge lay before him on the printed page. I spoke under the normal key of my voice that the current might not be broken, and I knew that he was not aware of what he

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was saying, for his thoughts were out on the sea with Longfellow.

‘Charlie,’ I asked, ‘when the rowers on the galleys mutinied how did they kill their overseers?’

‘Tore up the benches and brained ’em. That happened when a heavy sea was running. An overseer on the lower deck slipped from the centre plank and fell among the rowers. They choked him to death against the side of the ship with their chained hands quite quietly, and it was too dark for the other overseer to see what had happened. When he asked, he was pulled down too and choked, and the lower deck fought their way up deck by deck, with the pieces of the broken benches banging behind ’em. How they howled!’

‘And what happened after that?’

‘I don’t know. The hero went away—red hair and red beard and all. That was after he had captured our galley, I think.’

The sound of my voice irritated him, and he motioned slightly with his left hand as a man does when interruption jars.

‘You never told me he was red-headed before, or that he captured your galley,’ I said, after a discreet interval.

Charlie did not raise his eyes.

‘He was as red as a red bear,’ said he abstractedly. ‘He came from the north; they said so in the galley when he looked for rowers—not slaves, but free men. Afterwards—years and years afterwards—news came from another ship, or else he came back—’

His lips moved in silence. He was rapturously retasting some poem before him.

‘Where had he been, then?’ I was almost whispering

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that the sentence might come gently to whichever section of Charlie's brain was working on my behalf.

'To the Beaches—the Long and Wonderful Beaches!' was the reply after a minute of silence.

'To Furdurstrandi?' I asked, tingling from head to foot.

'Yes, to Furdurstrandi,' he pronounced the word in a new fashion. 'And I too saw—' The voice failed.

'Do you know what you have said?' I shouted incautiously.

He lifted his eyes, fully roused now. 'No!' he snapped, 'I wish you'd let a chap go on reading. Hark to this:—

“But Othere, the old sea captain,
He neither paused nor stirred
Till the king listened, and then
Once more took up his pen
And wrote down every word.

“And to the King of the Saxons
In witness of the truth,
Raising his noble head,
He stretched his brown hand and said,
'Behold this walrus tooth.'”

By Jove, what chaps those must have been, to go sailing all over the shop never knowing where they'd fetch the land! Hah!

'Charlie,' I pleaded, 'if you'll only be sensible for a minute or two I'll make our hero in our tale every inch as good as Othere.'

'Umph! Longfellow wrote that poem. I don't care about writing things any more. I want to read.' He was thoroughly out of tune now, and raging over my own ill-luck, I left him.

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Conceive yourself at the door of the world's treasure-house guarded by a child—an idle, irresponsible child playing knuckle-bones—on whose favour depends the gift of the key, and you will imagine one-half my torment. Till that evening Charlie had spoken nothing that might not lie within the experiences of a Greek galley-slave. But now, or there was no virtue in books, he had talked of some desperate adventure of the Vikings, of Thorfin Karlsefne's sailing to Wineland, which is America, in the ninth or tenth century. The battle in the harbour he had seen; and his own death he had described. But this was a much more startling plunge into the past. Was it possible that he had skipped half a dozen lives, and was then dimly remembering some episode of a thousand years later? It was a maddening jumble, and the worst of it was that Charlie Mears in his normal condition was the last person in the world to clear it up. I could only wait and watch, but I went to bed that night full of the wildest imaginings. There was nothing that was not possible if Charlie's detestable memory only held good.

I might rewrite the Saga of Thorfin Karlsefne as it had never been written before, might tell the story of the first discovery of America, myself the discoverer. But I was entirely at Charlie's mercy, and so long as there was a three-and-sixpenny Bohn volume within his reach Charlie would not tell. I dared not curse him openly; I hardly dared jog his memory, for I was dealing with the experiences of a thousand years ago, told through the mouth of a boy of to-day; and a boy is affected by every change of tone and gust of opinion, so that he must lie even when he most desires to speak the truth.

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I saw no more of Charlie for nearly a week. When next I met him it was in Gracechurch Street with a bill-book chained to his waist. Business took him over London Bridge, and I accompanied him. He was very full of the importance of that book and magnified it. As we passed over the Thames we paused to look at a steamer unloading great slabs of white and brown marble. A barge drifted under the steamer's stern and a lonely ship's cow in that barge bellowed. Charlie's face changed from the face of the bank-clerk to that of an unknown and—though he would not have believed this—a much shrewder man. He flung out his arm across the parapet of the bridge and laughing very loudly, said:—

‘When they heard our bulls bellow the Skrœlings ran away!’

I waited only for an instant, but the barge and the cow had disappeared under the bows of the steamer before I answered.

‘Charlie, what do you suppose are Skrœlings?’

‘Never heard of ’em before. They sound like a new kind of sea-gull. What a chap you are for asking questions!’ he replied. ‘I have to go to the cashier of the Omnibus Company yonder. Will you wait for me and we can lunch somewhere together? I’ve a notion for a poem.’

‘No, thanks. I’m off. You’re sure you know nothing about Skrœlings?’

‘Not unless he’s been entered for the Liverpool Handicap.’ He nodded and disappeared in the crowd.

Now it is written in the Saga of Eric the Red or that of Thorfin Karlsefne, that nine hundred years ago when Karlsefne’s galleys came to Leif’s booths, which Leif had erected in the unknown land called Markland, which

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may or may not have been Rhode Island, the Skroelings—and the Lord He knows who these may or may not have been—came to trade with the Vikings, and ran away because they were frightened at the bellowing of the cattle which Thorfin had brought with him in the ships. But what in the world could a Greek slave know of that affair? I wandered up and down among the streets trying to unravel the mystery, and the more I considered it the more baffling it grew. One thing only seemed certain, and that certainty took away my breath for the moment. If I came to full knowledge of anything at all, it would not be one life of the soul in Charlie Mears’s body, but half a dozen—half a dozen several and separate existences spent on blue water in the morning of the world!

Then I reviewed the situation.

Obviously if I used my knowledge I should stand alone and unapproachable until all men were as wise as myself. That would be something, but, manlike, I was ungrateful. It seemed bitterly unfair that Charlie’s memory should fail me when I needed it most. Great Powers Above!—I looked up at them through the fog-smoke—did the Lords of Life and Death know what this meant to me? Nothing less than eternal fame of the best kind, that comes from One, and is shared by one alone. I would be content—remembering Clive, I stood astounded at my own moderation—with the mere right to tell one story, to work out one little contribution to the light literature of the day. If Charlie were permitted full recollection for one hour—for sixty short minutes—of existences that had extended over a thousand years—I would forego all profit and honour from all that I should make of his speech. I would take no share in the com-

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motion that would follow throughout the particular corner of the earth that calls itself 'the world.' The thing should be put forth anonymously. Nay, I would make other men believe that they had written it. They would hire bull-hided self-advertising Englishmen to bellow it abroad. Preachers would found a fresh conduct of life upon it, swearing that it was new and that they had lifted the fear of death from all mankind. Every Orientalist in Europe would patronise it discursively with Sanskrit and Pali texts. Terrible women would invent unclean variants of the men's belief for the elevation of their sisters. Churches and religions would war over it. Between the hailing and restarting of an omnibus I foresaw the scuffles that would arise among half a dozen denominations all professing 'the doctrine of the True Metempsychosis as applied to the world and the New Era'; and saw, too, the respectable English newspapers shying, like frightened kine, over the beautiful simplicity of the tale. The mind leaped forward a hundred—two hundred—a thousand years. I saw with sorrow that men would mutilate and garble the story; that rival creeds would turn it upside down till, at last, the western world which clings to the dread of death more closely than the hope of life, would set it aside as an interesting superstition and stampede after some faith so long forgotten that it seemed altogether new. Upon this I changed the terms of the bargain that I would make with the Lords of Life and Death. Only let me know, let me write, the story with sure knowledge that I wrote the truth, and I would burn the manuscript as a solemn sacrifice. Five minutes after the last line was written I would destroy it all. But I must be allowed to write it with absolute certainty.

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There was no answer. The flaming colours of an Aquarium poster caught my eye, and I wondered whether it would be wise or prudent to lure Charlie into the hands of the professional mesmerist then, and whether, if he were under his power, he would speak of his past lives. If he did, and if people believed him . . . but Charlie would be frightened and flustered, or made conceited by the interviews. In either case he would begin to lie through fear or vanity. He was safest in my own hands.

‘They are very funny fools, your English,’ said a voice at my elbow, and turning round I recognised a casual acquaintance, a young Bengali law student, called Grish Chunder, whose father had sent him to England to become civilised. The old man was a retired native official, and on an income of five pounds a month contrived to allow his son two hundred pounds a year, and the run of his teeth in a city where he could pretend to be the cadet of a royal house, and tell stories of the brutal Indian bureaucrats who ground the faces of the poor.

Grish Chunder was a young, fat, full-bodied Bengali, dressed with scrupulous care in frock coat, tall hat, light trousers, and tan gloves. But I had known him in the days when the brutal Indian Government paid for his university education, and he contributed cheap sedition to the ‘Sachi Durpan,’ and intrigued with the wives of his fourteen-year-old school-mates.

‘That is very funny and very foolish,’ he said, nodding at the poster. ‘I am going down to the Northbrook Club. Will you come too?’

I walked with him for some time. ‘You are not well,’ he said. ‘What is there on your mind? You do not talk.’

‘Grish Chunder, you’ve been too well educated to believe in a God, haven’t you?’

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‘Oah, yes, here! But when I go home I must conciliate popular superstition, and make ceremonies of purification, and my women will anoint idols.’

‘And hang up tulsi and feast the purohit, and take you back into caste again, and make a good khuttri of you again, you advanced Freethinker. And you’ll eat desi food, and like it all, from the smell in the courtyard to the mustard oil over you.’

‘I shall very much like it,’ said Grish Chunder unguardedly. ‘Once a Hindu—always a Hindu. But I like to know what the English think they know.’

‘I’ll tell you something that one Englishman knows. It’s an old tale to you.’

I began to tell the story of Charlie in English, but Grish Chunder put a question in the vernacular, and the history went forward naturally in the tongue best suited for its telling. After all, it could never have been told in English. Grish Chunder heard me, nodding from time to time, and then came up to my rooms, where I finished the tale.

‘Beshak,’ he said philosophically. ‘Lekin darwaza band hai. (Without doubt. But the door is shut.) I have heard of this remembering of previous existences among my people. It is of course an old tale with us, but, to happen to an Englishman—a cow-fed Mlechh—an outcast. By Jove, that is most peculiar!’

‘Outcast yourself, Grish Chunder! You eat cow-beef every day. Let’s think the thing over. The boy remembers his incarnations.’

‘Does he know that?’ said Grish Chunder quietly, swinging his legs as he sat on my table. He was speaking in his English now.

‘He does not know anything. Would I speak to you if he did? Go on!’

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‘There is no going on at all. If you tell that to your friends they will say you are mad and put it in the papers. Suppose, now, you prosecute for libel.’

‘Let’s leave that out of the question entirely. Is there any chance of his being made to speak?’

‘There is a chance. Oah, yess! But if he spoke it would mean that all this world would end now—instanto—fall down on your head. These things are not allowed, you know. As I said, the door is shut.’

‘Not a ghost of a chance?’

‘How can there be? You are a Christi-an, and it is forbidden to eat, in your books, of the Tree of Life, or else you would never die. How shall you all fear death if you all know what your friend does not know that he knows? I am afraid to be kicked, but I am not afraid to die, because I know what I know. You are not afraid to be kicked, but you are afraid to die. If you were not, by God! you English would be all over the shop in an hour, upsetting the balances of power, and making commotions. It would not be good. But no fear. He will remember a little and a little less, and he will call it dreams. Then he will forget altogether. When I passed my First Arts Examination in Calcutta that was all in the cram-book on Wordsworth. “Trailing clouds of glory,” you know.’

‘This seems to be an exception to the rule.’

‘There are no exceptions to rules. Some are not so hard-looking as others, but they are all the same when you touch. If this friend of yours said so-and-so and so-and-so, indicating that he remembered all his lost lives, or one piece of a lost life, he would not be in the bank another hour. He would be what you called sack because he was mad, and they would send him to an asylum for lunatics. You can see that, my friend.’

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‘Of course I can, but I wasn’t thinking of him. His name need never appear in the story.’

‘Ah! I see. That story will never be written. You can try.’

‘I am going to.’

‘For your own credit and for the sake of money, of course?’

‘No. For the sake of writing the story. On my honour that will be all.’

‘Even then there is no chance. You cannot play with the gods. It is a very pretty story now. As they say, Let it go on that—I mean at that. Be quick; he will not last long.’

‘How do you mean?’

‘What I say. He has never, so far, thought about a woman.’

‘Hasn’t he, though!’ I remembered some of Charlie’s confidences.

‘I mean no woman has thought about him. When that comes; bus—hogya—all up! I know. There are millions of women here. Housemaids, for instance. They kiss you behind doors.’

I winced at the thought of my story being ruined by a housemaid. And yet nothing was more probable.

Grish Chunder grinned.

‘Yes—also pretty girls—cousins of his house, and perhaps not of his house. One kiss that he gives back again and remembers will cure all this nonsense, or else—’

‘Or else what? Remember he does not know that he knows.’

‘I know that. Or else, if nothing happens he will become immersed in the trade and the financial speculation

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like the rest. It must be so. You can see that it must be so. But the woman will come first, I think.'

There was a rap at the door, and Charlie charged in impetuously. He had been released from office, and by the look in his eyes I could see that he had come over for a long talk; most probably with poems in his pockets. Charlie's poems were very wearying, but sometimes they led him to speak about the galley.

Grish Chunder looked at him keenly for a minute.

'I beg your pardon,' Charlie said uneasily; 'I didn't know you had any one with you.'

'I am going,' said Grish Chunder.

He drew me into the lobby as he departed.

'That is your man,' he said quickly. 'I tell you he will never speak all you wish. That is rot—bosh. But he would be most good to make to see things. Suppose now we pretend that it was only play'—I had never seen Grish Chunder so excited—'and pour the ink-pool into his hand. Eh, what do you think? I tell you that he could see anything that a man could see. Let me get the ink and the camphor. He is a seer and he will tell us very many things.'

'He may be all you say, but I'm not going to trust him to your gods and devils.'

'It will not hurt him. He will only feel a little stupid and dull when he wakes up. You have seen boys look into the ink-pool before.'

'That is the reason why I am not going to see it any more. You'd better go, Grish Chunder.'

He went, insisting far down the staircase that it was throwing away my only chance of looking into the future.

This left me unmoved, for I was concerned for the past, and no peering of hypnotised boys into mirrors and ink-

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pools would help me to that. But I recognised Grish Chunder's point of view and sympathised with it.

'What a big black brute that was!' said Charlie, when I returned to him. 'Well, look here, I've just done a poem; did it instead of playing dominoes after lunch. May I read it?'

'Let me read it to myself.'

'Then you miss the proper expression. Besides, you always make my things sound as if the rhymes were all wrong.'

'Read it aloud, then. You're like the rest of 'em.'

Charlie mouthed me his poem, and it was not much worse than the average of his verses. He had been reading his books faithfully, but he was not pleased when I told him that I preferred my Longfellow undiluted with Charlie.

Then we began to go through the MS. line by line, Charlie parrying every objection and correction with:

'Yes, that may be better, but you don't catch what I'm driving at.'

Charlie was, in one way at least, very like one kind of poet.

There was a pencil scrawl at the back of the paper, and 'What's that?' I said.

'Oh, that's not poetry at all. It's some rot I wrote last night before I went to bed, and it was too much bother to hunt for rhymes; so I made it a sort of blank verse instead.'

Here is Charlie's 'blank verse':—

'We pulled for you when the wind was against us and the sails were low.

Will you never let us go?

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We ate bread and onions when you took towns, or ran aboard quickly when you were beaten back by the foe.

The captains walked up and down the deck in fair weather singing songs, but we were below.

We fainted with our chins on the oars and you did not see that we were idle for we still swung to and fro.

Will you never let us go?

The salt made the oar-handles like shark-skin; our knees were cut to the bone with salt cracks; our hair was stuck to our foreheads; and our lips were cut to our gums, and you whipped us because we could not row.

Will you never let us go?

But in a little time we shall run out of the portholes as the water runs along the oar-blade, and though you tell the others to row after us you will never catch us till you catch the oar-thresh and tie up the winds in the belly of the sail. Aho!

Will you never let us go?’

‘H’m. What’s oar-thresh, Charlie?’

‘The water washed up by the oars. That’s the sort of song they might sing in the galley, y’ know. Aren’t you ever going to finish that story and give me some of the profits?’

‘It depends on yourself. If you had only told me more about your hero in the first instance it might have been finished by now. You’re so hazy in your notions.’

‘I only want to give you the general notion of it—the knocking about from place to place and the fighting and all that. Can’t you fill in the rest yourself? Make the hero save a girl on a pirate-galley and marry her or do something.’

‘You’re a really helpful collaborator. I suppose the

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hero went through some few adventures before he married.'

'Well, then, make him a very artful card—a low sort of man—a sort of political man who went about making treaties and breaking them—a black-haired chap who hid behind the mast when the fighting began.'

'But you said the other day that he was red-haired.'

'I couldn't have. Make him black-haired of course. You've no imagination.'

Seeing that I had just discovered the entire principles upon which the half-memory falsely called imagination is based, I felt entitled to laugh, but forbore for the sake of the tale.

'You're right. You're the man with imagination. A black-haired chap in a decked ship,' I said.

'No, an open ship—like a big boat.'

This was maddening.

'Your ship has been built and designed, closed and decked in; you said so yourself,' I protested.

'No, no, not that ship. That was open or half-decked because—By Jove, you're right. You made me think of the hero as a red-haired chap. Of course if he were red, the ship would be an open one with painted sails.'

Surely, I thought, he would remember now that he had served in two galleys at least—in a three-decked Greek one under the black-haired 'political man,' and again in a Viking's open sea-serpent under the man 'red as a red bear' who went to Markland. The devil prompted me to speak.

'Why "of course," Charlie?' said I.

'I don't know. Are you making fun of me?'

The current was broken for the time being. I took up a note-book and pretended to make many entries in it.

‘THE FINEST STORY IN THE WORLD’

‘It’s a pleasure to work with an imaginative chap like yourself,’ I said, after a pause. ‘The way that you’ve brought out the character of the hero is simply wonderful.’

‘Do you think so?’ he answered, with a pleased flush. ‘I often tell myself that there’s more in me than my mo—than people think.’

‘There’s an enormous amount in you.’

‘Then, won’t you let me send an essay on “The Ways of Bank-Clerks” to “Tit-Bits,” and get the guinea prize?’

‘That wasn’t exactly what I meant, old fellow: perhaps it would be better to wait a little and go ahead with the galley-story.’

‘Ah, but I shan’t get the credit of that. “Tit-Bits” would publish my name and address if I win. What are you grinning at? They would.’

‘I know it. Suppose you go for a walk. I want to look through my notes about our story.’

Now this reprehensible youth who left me, a little hurt and put back, might for aught he or I knew have been one of the crew of the *Argo*—had been certainly slave or comrade to Thorfin Karlsefne. Therefore he was deeply interested in guinea competitions. Remembering what Grish Chunder had said I laughed aloud. The Lords of Life and Death would never allow Charlie Mears to speak with full knowledge of his pasts, and I must even piece out what he had told me with my own poor inventions while Charlie wrote of the ways of bank-clerks.

I got together and placed on one file all my notes; and the net result was not cheering. I read them a second time. There was nothing that might not have been compiled at second hand from other people’s books—except, perhaps, the story of the fight in the harbour. The adventures of a Viking had been written many times be-

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fore; the history of a Greek galley-slave was no new thing, and though I wrote both, who could challenge or confirm the accuracy of my details? I might as well tell a tale of two thousand years hence. The Lords of Life and Death were as cunning as Grish Chunder had hinted. They would allow nothing to escape that might trouble or make easy the minds of men. Though I was convinced of this, yet I could not leave the tale alone. Exaltation followed reaction, not once, but twenty times in the next few weeks. My moods varied with the March sunlight and flying clouds. By night or in the beauty of a spring morning I perceived that I could write that tale and shift continents thereby. In the wet windy afternoons I saw that the tale might indeed be written, but would be nothing more than a faked, false-varnished, sham-rusted piece of Wardour Street work in the end. Then I blessed Charlie in many ways—though it was no fault of his. He seemed to be busy with prize competitions, and I saw less and less of him as the weeks went by and the earth cracked and grew ripe to spring, and the buds swelled in their sheaths. He did not care to read or talk of what he had read, and there was a new ring of self-assertion in his voice. I hardly cared to remind him of the galley when we met; but Charlie alluded to it on every occasion, always as a story from which money was to be made.

‘I think I deserve twenty-five per cent, don’t I, at least?’ he said, with beautiful frankness. ‘I supplied all the ideas, didn’t I?’

This greediness for silver was a new side in his nature. I assumed that it had been developed in the City, where Charlie was picking up the curious nasal drawl of the underbred City man.

‘THE FINEST STORY IN THE WORLD’

‘When the thing’s done we’ll talk about it. I can’t make anything of it at present. Red-haired or black-haired heroes are equally difficult.’

He was sitting by the fire staring at the red coals. ‘I can’t understand what you find so difficult. It’s all as clear as mud to me,’ he replied. A jet of gas puffed out between the bars, took light, and whistled softly. ‘Suppose we take the red-haired hero’s adventures first, from the time that he came south to my galley and captured it and sailed to the Beaches.’

I knew better now than to interrupt Charlie. I was out of reach of pen and paper, and dared not move to get them lest I should break the current. The gas-jet puffed and whinnied, Charlie’s voice dropped almost to a whisper, and he told a tale of the sailing of an open galley to Furdurstrandi, of sunsets on the open sea, seen under the curve of the one sail evening after evening when the galley’s beak was notched into the centre of the sinking disc, and ‘we sailed by that for we had no other guide,’ quoth Charlie. He spoke of a landing on an island and explorations in its woods, where the crew killed three men whom they found asleep under the pines. Their ghosts, Charlie said, followed the galley, swimming and choking in the water, and the crew cast lots and threw one of their number overboard as a sacrifice to the strange gods whom they had offended. Then they ate sea-weed when their provisions failed, and their legs swelled, and their leader, the red-haired man, killed two rowers who mutinied, and after a year spent among the woods they set sail for their own country, and a wind that never failed carried them back so safely that they all slept at night. This, and much more Charlie told. Sometimes the voice fell so low that I could not catch the words,

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though every nerve was on the strain. He spoke of their leader, the red-haired man, as a pagan speaks of his God; for it was he who cheered them and slew them impartially as he thought best for their needs; and it was he who steered them for three days among floating ice, each floe crowded with strange beasts that 'tried to sail with us,' said Charlie, 'and we beat them back with the handles of the oars.'

The gas-jet went out, a burnt coal gave way, and the fire settled with a tiny crash to the bottom of the grate. Charlie ceased speaking, and I said no word.

'By Jove!' he said at last, shaking his head. 'I've been staring at the fire till I'm dizzy. What was I going to say?'

'Something about the galley-book.'

'I remember now. It's twenty-five per cent of the profits, isn't it?'

'It's anything you like when I've done the tale.'

'I wanted to be sure of that. I must go now. I've—I've an appointment.' And he left me.

Had not my eyes been held I might have known that that broken muttering over the fire was the swan-song of Charlie Mears. But I thought it the prelude to fuller revelation. At last and at last I should cheat the Lords of Life and Death!

When next Charlie came to me I received him with rapture. He was nervous and embarrassed, but his eyes were very full of light, and his lips a little parted.

'I've done a poem,' he said; and then, quickly: 'It's the best I've ever done. Read it.' He thrust it into my hand and retreated to the window.

I groaned inwardly. It would be the work of half an hour to criticise—that is to say, praise—the poem suffi-

‘THE FINEST STORY IN THE WORLD’

ciently to please Charlie. Then I had good reason to groan, for Charlie, discarding his favourite centipede metres, had launched into shorter and choppier verse, and verse with a motive at the back of it. This is what I read:—

‘The day is most fair, the cheery wind
Halloos behind the hill,
Where he bends the wood as seemeth good,
And the sapling to his will!
Riot, O wind; there is that in my blood
That would not have thee still!

‘She gave me herself, O Earth, O Sky;
Gray sea, she is mine alone!
Let the sullen boulders hear my cry,
And rejoice tho’ they be but stone!

‘Mine! I have won her, O good brown Earth,
Make merry! ’Tis hard on Spring;
Make merry—my love is doubly worth
All worship your fields can bring!
Let the hind that tills you feel my mirth
At the early harrowing!’

‘Yes, it’s the early harrowing, past a doubt,’ I said, with a dread at my heart. Charlie smiled, but did not answer.

‘Red cloud of the sunset, tell it abroad;
I am victor. Greet me, O Sun,
Dominant master and absolute lord
Over the soul of one!’

‘Well?’ said Charlie, looking over my shoulder.

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I thought it far from well, and very evil indeed, when he silently laid a photograph on the paper—the photograph of a girl with a curly head and a foolish slack mouth.

‘Isn’t it— isn’t it wonderful?’ he whispered, pink to the tips of his ears, wrapped in the rosy mystery of first love. ‘I didn’t know; I didn’t think—it came like a thunderclap.’

‘Yes. It comes like a thunderclap. Are you very happy, Charlie?’

‘My God—she—she loves me!’ He sat down repeating the last words to himself. I looked at the hairless face, the narrow shoulders already bowed by desk-work, and wondered when, where, and how he had loved in his past lives.

‘What will your mother say?’ I asked cheerfully.

‘I don’t care a damn what she says!’

At twenty the things for which one does not care a damn should, properly, be many, but one must not include mothers in the list. I told him this gently; and he described Her, even as Adam must have described to the newly-named beasts the glory and tenderness and beauty of Eve. Incidentally I learned that She was a tobacconist’s assistant with a weakness for pretty dress, and had told him four or five times already that She had never been kissed by a man before.

Charlie spoke on and on, and on; while I, separated from him by thousands of years, was considering the beginnings of things. Now I understood why the Lords of Life and Death shut the doors so carefully behind us. It is that we may not remember our first and most beautiful wooings. Were this not so, our world would be without inhabitants in a hundred years.

‘THE FINEST STORY IN THE WORLD’

‘Now, about that galley-story,’ I said still more cheerfully, in a pause in the rush of the speech.

Charlie looked up as though he had been hit. ‘The galley—what galley? Good heavens, don’t joke, man! This is serious! You don’t know how serious it is!’

Grish Chunder was right. Charlie had tasted the love of woman that kills remembrance, and the finest story in the world would never be written.

HIS PRIVATE HONOUR

(1891)

THE autumn batch of recruits for the Old Regiment had just been uncartered. As usual they were said to be the worst draft that had ever come from the Depot. Mulvaney looked them over, grunted scornfully, and immediately reported himself very sick.

‘Is it the regular autumn fever?’ said the doctor, who knew something of Terence’s ways. ‘Your temperature’s normal.’

‘’Tis wan hundred and thirty-seven rookies to the bad, sorr. I’m not very sick now, but I will be dead if these boys are thrown at me in my rejuiced condition. Doctor, dear, supposin’ you was in charge of three cholera camps an’—’

‘Go to hospital then, you old contriver,’ said the doctor, laughing.

Terence bundled himself into a blue bedgown,—Dinah Shadd was away attending to a major’s lady, who preferred Dinah without a diploma to anybody else with a hundred,—put a pipe in his teeth, and paraded the hospital balcony, exhorting Ortheris to be a father to the new recruits.

‘They’re mostly your own sort, little man,’ he said, with a grin; ‘the top-spit av Whitechapel. I’ll interogue

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them whin they're more like something they never will be,—an' that's a good honest soldier like me.'

Ortheris yapped indignantly. He knew as well as Terence what the coming work meant, and he thought Terence's conduct mean. Then he strolled off to look at the new cattle, who were staring at the unfamiliar landscape with large eyes, and asking if the kites were eagles and the pariah-dogs jackals.

'Well, you are a holy set of bean-faced beggars, you are,' he said genially to a knot in the barrack square. Then, running his eye over them,—'Fried fish an' wheelks is about your sort. Blimy if they haven't sent some pink-eyed Jews too. You chap with the greasy 'ed, which o' the Solomons was your father, Moses?'

'My name's Anderson,' said a voice sullenly.

'Oh, Samuelson! All right, Samuelson! An' 'ow many o' the likes o' you Sheenies are comin' to spoil B Company?'

There is no scorn so complete as that of the old soldier for the new. It is right that this should be so. A recruit must learn first that he is not a man but a thing, which in time, and by the mercy of Heaven, may develop into a soldier of the Queen if it takes care and attends to good advice. Ortheris's tunic was open, his cap overlopped one eye, and his hands were behind his back as he walked round, growing more contemptuous at each step. The recruits did not dare to answer, for they were new boys in a strange school, who had called themselves soldiers at the Depot in comfortable England.

'Not a single pair o' shoulders in the whole lot. I've seen some bad drafts in my time,—some bloomin' bad drafts; but this 'ere draft beats any draft I've ever known. Jock, come an' look at these squidgy, ham-shanked beggars.'

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Learoyd was walking across the square. He arrived slowly, circled round the knot as a whale circles round a shoal of small fry, said nothing, and went away whistling.

'Yes, you may well look sheepy,' Ortheris squeaked to the boys. 'It's the likes of you breaks the 'earts of the likes of us. We've got to lick you into shape, and never a ha'penny extry do we get for so doin', and you ain't never grateful neither. Don't you go thinkin' it's the Colonel nor yet the company orf'cer that makes you. It's us, you Johnnie Raws—you Johnnie bloomin' Raws!'

A company officer had come up unperceived behind Ortheris at the end of this oration. 'You may be right, Ortheris,' he said quietly, 'but I shouldn't shout it.' The recruits grinned as Ortheris saluted and collapsed.

Some days afterwards I was privileged to look over the new batch, and they were everything that Ortheris had said, and more. B Company had been devastated by forty or fifty of them; and B Company's drill on parade was a sight to shudder at. Ortheris asked them lovingly whether they had not been sent out by mistake, and whether they had not better post themselves back to their friends. Learoyd thrashed them methodically one by one, without haste but without slovenliness; and the older soldiers took the remnants from Learoyd and went over them in their own fashion. Mulvaney stayed in hospital, and grinned from the balcony when Ortheris called him a shirker and other worse names.

'By the grace av God we'll brew men av them yet,' Terence said one day. 'Be vartuous an' parsevere, me son. There's the makin's av colonels in that mob if we only go deep enough—wid a belt.'

'We!' Ortheris replied, dancing with rage. 'I just

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love you and your "we's." 'Ere's B Company drillin' like a drunk Militia reg'ment.'

'So I've been officially acquent,' was the answer from on high; 'but I'm too sick this tide to make certain.'

'An' you, you fat H'irishman, sniftin' an' shirkin' up there among the arrerroot an' the sago!'

'An' the port wine,—you've forgot the port wine, Orth'ris: 'tis none so bad.' Terence smacked his lips provokingly.

'And we're wore off our feet with these 'ere—kangaroos. Come out o' that, an' earn your pay. Come on down outer that, an' do somethin', 'stead o' grinnin' up there like a Jew monkey, you frowsy-'eaded Fenian!'

'When I'm better av my various complaints I'll have a little private talkin' wid you. In the meanwhile,—duck!'

Terence flung an empty medicine bottle at Ortheris's head and dropped into a long chair, and Ortheris came to tell me his opinion of Mulvaney three times over,—each time entirely varying all the words.

'There'll be a smash one o' these days,' he concluded. 'Well, it's none o' my fault, but it's 'ard on B Company.'

It was very hard on B Company, for twenty seasoned men cannot push twice that number of fools into their places and keep their own places at the same time. The recruits should have been more evenly distributed through the regiment, but it seemed good to the Colonel to mass them in a company where there was a fair proportion of old soldiers. He found his reward early one morning when the battalion was advancing by companies in echelon from the right. The order was given to form company squares, which are compact little bricks of men very unpleasant for a line of charging cavalry to deal with. B Company was on the left flank, and had ample

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time to know what was going on. For that reason, presumably, it gathered itself into a thing like a decayed aloe-clump, the bayonets pointing anywhere in general and nowhere in particular; and in that clump, roundel, or mob it stayed till the dust had gone down and the Colonel could see and speak. He did both, and the speaking part was admitted by the regiment to be the finest thing that the 'old man' had ever risen to since one delightful day at a sham-fight, when a cavalry division had occasion to walk over his line of skirmishers. He said, almost weeping, that he had given no order for rallying groups, and that he preferred to see a little dressing among the men occasionally. He then apologised for having mistaken B Company for men. He said that they were but little children weak, and that since he could not offer them each a perambulator and a nurse-maid (this may sound comic to read, but B Company heard it by word of mouth and winced) perhaps the best thing for them to do would be to go back to squad-drill. To that end he proposed sending them, out of their turn, to garrison duty in Fort Amara, five miles away,—D Company were next for this detestable duty and nearly cheered the Colonel. There he devoutly hoped that their own subalterns would drill them to death, as they were of no use in their present life.

It was an exceedingly painful scene, and I made haste to be near B Company barracks when parade was dismissed and the men were free to talk. There was no talking at first, because each old soldier took a new draft and kicked him very severely. The non-commissioned officers had neither eyes nor ears for these accidents. They left the barracks to themselves, and Ortheris improved the occasion by a speech. I did not hear that

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speech, but fragments of it were quoted for weeks afterwards. It covered the birth, parentage, and education of every man in the company by name; it gave a complete account of Fort Amara from a sanitary and social point of view; and it wound up with an abstract of the whole duty of a soldier, each recruit his use in life, and Ortheris's views on the use and fate of the recruits of B Company.

'You can't drill, you can't walk, you can't shoot,—you,—you awful rookies! Wot's the good of you? You eats and you sleeps, and you eats, and you goes to the doctor for medicine when your innards is out o' order for all the world as if you was bloomin' generals. An' now you've topped it all, you bats'-eyed beggars, with getting us druv out to that stinkin' Fort 'Ammerer. We'll fort you when we get out there; yes, an' we'll 'ammer you too. Don't you think you've come into the Harmacy to drink Heno, an' club your comp'ny, an' lie on your cots an' scratch your fat heads. You can do that at 'ome sellin' matches, which is all you're fit for, you keb-huntin', penny-toy, bootlace, baggage-tout, 'orse-'oldin', sandwich-backed se-werss, you.¹ I've spoke you as fair as I know 'ow, and you give good 'eed, 'cause if Mulvaney stops skrimshanking—gets out o' 'orspital—when we're in the Fort, I lay your lives will be trouble to you.'

That was Ortheris's peroration, and it caused B Company to be christened the Boot-black Brigade. With this disgrace on their slack shoulders they went to garrison duty at Fort Amara with their officers, who were under instructions to twist their little tails. The army, unlike every other profession, cannot be taught through

¹Ortheris meant 'soors'—which means pigs.

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shilling books. First a man must suffer, then he must learn his work, and the self-respect that that knowledge brings. The learning is hard, in a land where the army is not a red thing that walks down the street to be looked at, but a living tramping reality that may be needed at the shortest notice, when there is no time to say, 'Hadn't you better?' and 'Won't you please?'

The company officers divided themselves into three. When Brander the captain was wearied, he gave over to Maydew, and when Maydew was hoarse he ordered the junior subaltern Oules to bucket the men through squad and company drill, till Brander could go on again. Out of parade hours the old soldiers spoke to the reeruits as old soldiers will, and between the four forees at work on them, the new draft began to stand on their feet and feel that they belonged to a good and honourable serviee. This was proved by their once or twice resenting Ortheris's technical lectures.

'Drop it now, lad,' said Learoyd, coming to the rescue. 'Th' pups are biting back. They're none so rotten as we looked for.'

'Ho! Yuss! You think yourself soldiers now, 'cause you don't fall over each other on p'rade, don't you? You think 'eause the dirt don't eake off you week's end to week's end that you're elean men. You think 'cause you can fire your rifle without more nor shuttin' both eyes, you're something to fight, don't you? You'll know later on,' said Ortheris to the barraek-room generally. 'Not but what you're a little better than you was,' he added, with a graeious wave of his eutty.

It was in this transition-stage that I came across the new draft once more. Their officers, in the zeal of youth forgetting that the old soldiers who stiffened the sections

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must suffer equally with the raw material under hammering, had made all a little stale and unhandy with continuous drill in the square, instead of marching the men into the open, and supplying them with skirmishing drill. The month of garrison-duty in the Fort was nearly at an end, and B Company were quite fit for a self-respecting regiment to drill with. They had no style or spring,—that would come in time,—but so far as they went they were passable. I met Maydew one day and inquired after their health. He told me that young Oules was putting a polish on a half-company of them in the great square by the east bastion of the Fort that afternoon. Because the day was Saturday I went off to taste the full beauty of leisure in watching another man hard at work.

The fat forty-pound muzzle-loaders on the east bastion made a very comfortable resting-place. You could sprawl full length on the iron warmed by the afternoon sun to blood heat, and command an easy view of the parade-ground which lay between the powder-magazine and the curtain of the bastion.

I saw a half-company called over and told off for drill, saw Oules come from his quarters, tugging at his gloves, and heard the first ‘‘Shun!’’ that locks the ranks and shows that work has begun. Then I went off on my own thoughts; the squeaking of the boots and the rattle of the rifles making a good accompaniment, and the line of red coats and black trousers a suitable background to them all. They concerned the formation of a territorial army for India,—an army of specially paid men enlisted for twelve years’ service in Her Majesty’s Indian possessions, with the option of extending on medical certificate for another five and the certainty of a pension at the end.

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They would be such an army as the world had never seen,—one hundred thousand trained men drawing annually five, no, fifteen thousand men from England, making India their home, and allowed to marry in reason. Yes, I thought, watching the line shift to and fro, break and re-form, we would buy back Cashmere from the drunken imbecile who was turning it into a hell, and there we would plant our much-married regiments,—the men who had served ten years of their time,—and there they should breed us white soldiers, and perhaps a second fighting-line of Eurasians. At all events Cashmere was the only place in India that the Englishman could colonise, and if we had foothold there we could . . . Oh, it was a beautiful dream! I left that territorial army swelled to a quarter of a million men far behind, swept on as far as an independent India, hiring warships from the mother-country, guarding Aden on the one side and Singapore on the other, paying interest on her loans with beautiful regularity, but borrowing no men from beyond her own borders—a colonised, manufacturing India with a permanent surplus and her own flag. I had just installed myself as Viceroy, and by virtue of my office had shipped four million sturdy thrifty natives to the Malayan Archipelago, where labour is always wanted and the Chinese pour in too quickly, when I became aware that things were not going smoothly with the half-company. There was a great deal too much shuffling and shifting and ‘as you were’-ing. The non-commissioned officers were snapping at the men, and I fancied Oules backed one of his orders with an oath. He was in no position to do this, because he was a junior who had not yet learned to pitch his word of command in the same key twice running. Sometimes he squeaked,

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and sometimes he grunted; and a clear full voice with a ring in it has more to do with drill than people think. He was nervous both on parade and in mess, because he was unproven and knew it. One of his majors had said in his hearing, 'Oules has a skin or two to slough yet, and he hasn't the sense to be aware of it.' That remark had stayed in Oules's mind and caused him to think about himself in little things, which is not the best training for a young man. He tried to be cordial at mess, and became over-effusive. Then he tried to stand on his dignity, and appeared sulky and boorish. He was only hunting for the just medium and the proper note, and had found neither because he had never faced himself in a big thing. With his men he was as ill at ease as he was with his mess, and his voice betrayed him. I heard two orders and then:—'Sergeant, what is that rear-rankman doing, damn him?' That was sufficiently bad. A company officer ought not to ask sergeants for information. He commands, and commands are not held by syndicates.

It was too dusty to see the drill accurately, but I could hear the excited little voice pitching from octave to octave, and the uneasy ripple of badgered or bad-tempered files running down the ranks. Oules had come on parade as sick of his duty as were the men of theirs. The hot sun had told on everybody's temper, but most of all on the youngest man's. He had evidently lost his self-control, and not possessing the nerve or the knowledge to break off till he had recovered it again, was making bad worse by ill-language.

The men shifted their ground and came close under the gun I was lying on. They were wheeling quarter-right and they did it very badly, in the natural hope of

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hearing Ouless swear again. He could have taught them nothing new, but they enjoyed the exhibition. Instead of swearing Ouless lost his head completely, and struck out nervously at the wheeling flank-man with a little Malacca riding-cane, that he held in his hand for a pointer. The cane was topped with thin silver over lacquer, and the silver had worn through in one place, leaving a triangular flap sticking up. I had just time to see that Ouless had thrown away his commission by striking a soldier, when I heard the rip of cloth and a piece of gray shirt showed under the torn scarlet on the man's shoulder. It had been the merest nervous flick of an exasperated boy, but quite enough to forfeit his commission, since it had been dealt in anger to a volunteer and no pressed man, who could not under the rules of the Service reply. The effect of it, thanks to the natural depravity of things, was as though Ouless had cut the man's coat off his back. Knowing the new draft by reputation, I was fairly certain that every one of them would swear with many oaths that Ouless had actually thrashed the man. In that case Ouless would do well to pack his trunk. His career as a servant of the Queen in any capacity was ended. The wheel continued, and the men halted and dressed immediately opposite my resting-place. Ouless's face was perfectly bloodless. The flanking man was a dark red, and I could see his lips moving in wicked words. He was Ortheris! After seven years' service and three medals, he had been struck by a boy younger than himself! Further, he was my friend and a good man, a proved man, and an Englishman. The shame of the thing made me as hot as it made Ouless cold, and if Ortheris had slipped in a cartridge and cleared the account at once I should have

rejoiced. The fact that Ortheris, of all men, had been struck, proved that the boy could not have known whom he was hitting; but he should have remembered that he was no longer a boy. And then I was sorry for him, and then I was angry again, and Ortheris stared in front of him and grew redder and redder.

The drill halted for a moment. No one knew why, for not three men could have seen the insult, the wheel being end-on to Oules at the time. Then, led, I conceived, by the hand of Fate, Brander, the captain, crossed the drill-ground, and his eye was caught by not more than a square foot of gray shirt over a shoulder-blade that should have been covered by well-fitting tunic.

'Heavens and earth!' he said, crossing in three strides. 'Do you let your men come on parade in rags, sir? What's that scarecrow doing here? Fall out, that flank-man. What do you mean by—You, Ortheris! of all men. What the deuce do you mean?'

'Beg y' pardon, sir,' said Ortheris. 'I scratched it against the guard-gate running up to parade.'

'Scratched it! Ripped it up, you mean. It's half off your back.'

'It was a little tear at first, sir, but in portin' arms it got stretched, sir, an'—an' I can't look be'ind me—I felt it givin', sir.'

'Hm!' said Brander. 'I should think you did feel it give. I thought it was one of the new draft. You've a good pair of shoulders. Go on!'

He turned to go. Oules stepped after him, very white, and said something in a low voice.

'Hey, what? What? Ortheris,' the voice dropped. I saw Ortheris salute, say something, and stand at attention.

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‘Dismiss,’ said Brander curtly. The men were dismissed. ‘I can’t make this out. You say—?’ he nodded at Oules, who said something again. Ortheris stood still, the torn flap of his tunic falling nearly to his waist-belt. He had, as Brander said, a good pair of shoulders, and prided himself on the fit of his tunic.

‘Beg y’ pardon, sir,’ I heard him say, ‘but I think Lieutenant Oules has been in the sun too long. He don’t quite remember things, sir. I come on p’rade with a bit of a rip, and it spread, sir, through portin’ arms, as I ’ave said, sir.’

Brander looked from one face to the other and I suppose drew his own conclusions, for he told Ortheris to go with the other men who were flocking back to barracks. Then he spoke to Oules and went away, leaving the boy in the middle of the parade-ground fumbling with his sword-knot.

Oules looked up, saw me lying on the gun, and came to me biting the back of his gloved forefinger, so completely thrown off his balance that he had not sense enough to keep his trouble to himself.

‘I say, you saw that, I suppose?’ He jerked his head back to the square, where the dust left by the departing men was settling down in white circles.

‘I did,’ I answered, for I was not feeling polite.

‘What the devil ought I to do?’ He bit his finger again. ‘I told Brander what I had done. I hit him.’

‘I’m perfectly aware of that,’ I said, ‘and I don’t suppose Ortheris has forgotten it already.’

‘Ye—es; but I’m dashed if I know what I ought to do. Exchange into another company, I suppose. I can’t ask the man to exchange, I suppose. Hey?’

The suggestion showed the glimmerings of proper

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sense, but he should not have come to me or any one else for help. It was his own affair, and I told him so. He seemed unconvinced, and began to talk of the possibilities of being cashiered. At this point the spirit moved me, on behalf of the unavenged Ortheris, to paint him a beautiful picture of his insignificance in the scheme of creation. He had a papa and a mamma seven thousand miles away, and perhaps some friends. They would feel his disgrace, but no one else would care a penny. He would be only Lieutenant Oules of the Old Regiment dismissed the Queen's service for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. The Commander-in-Chief, who would confirm the orders of the court-martial, would not know who he was; his mess would not speak of him; he would return to Bombay, if he had money enough to go home, more alone than when he had come out. Finally,—I rounded the sketch with precision,—he was only one tiny dab of red in the vast gray field of the Indian Empire. He must work this crisis out alone, and no one could help him, and no one cared—(this was untrue, because I cared immensely: he had spoken the truth to Brander on the spot)—whether he pulled through it or did not pull through it. At last his face set and his figure stiffened.

‘Thanks, that’s quite enough. I don’t want to hear any more,’ he said in a dry grating voice, and went to his own quarters.

Brander spoke to me afterwards and asked me some absurd question as to whether I had seen Oules cut the coat off Ortheris’s back. I knew that jagged sliver of silver would do its work well, but I contrived to impress on Brander the completeness, the wonderful completeness, of my disassociation from that drill. I began to

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tell him all about my dreams for the new territorial army in India, and he left me.

I could not see Ortheris for some days, but I learnt that when he returned to his fellows he had told the story of the blow in vivid language. Samuelson, the Jew, then asserted that it was not good enough to live in a regiment where you were drilled off your feet and knocked about like a dog. The remark was a perfectly innocent one, and exactly tallied with Ortheris's expressed opinions. Yet Ortheris had called Samuelson an unmentionable Jew, had accused him of kicking women on the head in London, and howling under the cat, had hustled him, as a bantam hustles a barn-door cock, from one end of the barrack-room to the other, and finally had heaved every single article of Samuelson's valise and bedding-roll into the veranda and the outer dirt, kicking Samuelson every time that the bewildered creature stooped to pick anything up. My informant could not account for this inconsistency, but it seemed to me that Ortheris was working off his temper.

Mulvaney had heard the story in hospital. First his face clouded, then he spat, and then laughed. I suggested that he had better return to active duty, but he saw it in another light, and told me that Ortheris was quite capable of looking after himself and his own affairs. 'An' if I did come out,' said Terence, 'like as not I would be catchin' young Oules by the scruff av his trousers an' makin' an example av him before the men. Whin Dinah came back I would be under court-martial, an' all for the sake av a little bit av a bhoys that'll make an orf'cer yet. What's he goin' to do, sorr, do ye know?'

'Which?' said I.

'Oules, av course. I've no fear for the man. Begad,

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tho', if ut had come to me—but ut could not have so come—I'd ha' made him cut his wisdom-teeth on his own sword-hilt.'

'I don't think he knows himself what he means to do,' I said.

'I should not wonder,' said Terence. 'There's a dale av thinkin' before a young man whin he's done wrong an' knows ut, an' is studyin' how to put ut right. Give the word from me to our little man there, that if he had ha' told on his shuperior orf'cer I'd ha' come out to Fort Amara to kick him into the Fort ditch, an' that's a forty-fut drop.'

Ortheris was not in good condition to talk to. He wandered up and down with Learoyd brooding, so far as I could see, over his lost honour, and using, as I could hear, incendiary language. Learoyd would nod and spit and smoke and nod again, and he must have been a great comfort to Ortheris—almost as great a comfort as Samuelson, whom Ortheris bullied disgracefully. If the Jew opened his mouth in the most casual remark Ortheris would plunge down it with all arms and accoutrements, while the barrack-room stared and wondered.

Oules had retired into himself to meditate. I saw him now and again, and he avoided me because I had witnessed his shame and spoken my mind on it. He seemed dull and moody, and found his half-company anything but pleasant to drill. The men did their work and gave him very little trouble, but just when they should have been feeling their feet, and showing that they felt them by spring and swing and snap, the elasticity died out and it was only drilling with war-game blocks. There is a beautiful little ripple in a well-made line of men, exactly like the play of a perfectly-tempered

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sword. Oules's half-company moved as a broom-stick moves, and would have broken as easily.

I was speculating whether Oules had sent money to Ortheris, which would have been bad, or had apologised to him in private, which would have been worse, or had decided to let the whole affair slide, which would have been worst of all, when orders came to me to leave the station for a while. I had not spoken directly to Ortheris, for his honour was not my honour, and he was its only guardian, and he would not say anything except bad words.

I went away, and from time to time thought a great deal of that subaltern and that private in Fort Amara, and wondered what would be the upshot of everything.

When I returned it was early spring. B Company had been shifted from the Fort to regular duty in cantonments, the roses were getting ready to bud on the Mall, and the regiment, which had been at a camp of exercise among other things, was going through its spring musketry-course under an adjutant who had a notion that its shooting average was low. He had stirred up the company officers and they had bought extra ammunition for their men—the Government allowance is just sufficient to foul the rifling—and E Company, which counted many marksmen, was vapouring and offering to challenge all the other companies, and the third-class shots were very sorry that they had ever been born, and all the subalterns were a rich ripe saddle-colour from sitting at the butts six and eight hours a day.

I went off to the butts after breakfast very full of curiosity to see how the new draft had come forward. Oules was there with his men by the bald hillock that marks the six hundred yards' range, and the men were

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in gray-green khaki, that shows the best points of a soldier and shades off into every background he may stand against. Before I was in hearing distance I could see, as they sprawled on the dusty grass, or stood up and shook themselves, that they were men made over again—wearing their helmets with the cock of self-possession, swinging easily, and jumping to the word of command. Coming nearer, I heard Ouless whistling 'Ballyhooly' between his teeth as he looked down the range with his binoculars, and the back of Lieutenant Ouless was the back of a free man and an officer. He nodded as I came up, and I heard him fling an order to a non-commissioned officer in a sure and certain voice. The flag ran up from the target, and Ortheris threw himself down on his stomach to put in his ten shots. He winked at me over the breech-block as he settled himself, with the air of a man who has to go through tricks for the benefit of children.

'Watch, you men,' said Ouless to the squad behind. 'He's half your weight, Brannigan, but he isn't afraid of his rifle.'

Ortheris had his little affectations and pet ways as the rest of us have. He weighed his rifle, gave it a little kick-up, cuddled down again, and fired across the ground that was beginning to dance in the sun-heat.

'Miss!' said a man behind.

'Too much bloomin' background in front,' Ortheris muttered.

'I should allow two feet for refraction,' said Ouless.

Ortheris fired again, made his outer, crept in, found the bull and stayed there; the non-commissioned officer pricking off the shots.

'Can't make out 'ow I missed that first,' he said, ris-

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ing, and stepping back to my side, as Learoyd took his place.

‘Is it company practice?’ I asked.

‘No. Only just knockin’ about. Oules, ’e’s givin’ ten rupees for second-class shots. I’m outer it, of course, but I come on to show ’em the proper style o’ doin’ things. Jock looks like a sea-lion at the Brighton Aquarium sprawlin’ an’ crawlin’ down there, don’t ’e? Gawd, what a butt this end of ’im would make.’

‘B Company has come up very well,’ I said.

‘They ’ad to. They’re none so dusty now, are they? Samuelson even, ’e can shoot sometimes. We’re gettin’ on as well as can be expected, thank you.’

‘How do you get on with—?’

‘Oh, ’im! First-rate! There’s nothin’ wrong with ’im.’

‘Was it all settled then?’

‘’Asn’t Terence told you? I should say it was. ’E’s a gentleman, ’e is.’

‘Let’s hear,’ I said.

Ortheris twinkled all over, tucked his rifle across his knees and repeated, ‘’E’s a gentleman. ’E’s an officer too. You saw all that mess in Fort ’Ammerer. ’Twasn’t none o’ my fault, as you can guess. Only some goat in the drill judged it was be’yaviour or something to play the fool on ’p’rade. That’s why we drilled so bad. When ’e ’it me, I was so took aback I couldn’t do nothing, an’ when I wished for to knock ’im down the wheel ’ad gone on, an’ I was facin’ you there lyin’ on the guns. After the captain had come up an’ was raggin’ me about my tunic bein’ tore, I saw the young beggar’s eye, an’ ’fore I could ’elp myself I begun to lie like a good ’un. You ’eard that? It was quite instinkive,

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but, my! I was in a lather. Then he said to the captain, "I struck 'im!" sez 'e, 'an' I 'eard Brander whistle, an' then I come out with a new set o' lies all about portin' arms an' 'ow the rip growed, same as you 'eard. I done that too before I knew where I was. Then I give Samuelson what-for in barricks when he was dismissed. You should ha' seen 'is kit by the time I'd finished with it. It was all over the bloomin' Fort! Then me an' Jock went off to Mulvaney in 'orspital, five-mile walk, an' I was hoppin' mad. Oules, 'e knowed it was court-martial for me if I 'it 'im back—'e must ha' knowed. Well, I sez to Terence, whisperin' under the 'orspital balcony—"Terence," sez I, "what in 'ell am I to do?" I told 'im all about the row same as you saw. Terence 'e whistles like a bloomin' old bullfinch up there in 'orspital, an' 'e sez, "You ain't to blame," sez 'e. "'Strewth," sez I, "d'you suppose I've come 'ere five mile in the sun to take blame?" I sez. "I want that young beggar's hide took off. I ain't a bloomin' conscrip'," I sez, "I'm a private servin' of the Queen, an' as good a man as 'e is," I sez, "for all 'is commission an' 'is airs an' 'is money," sez I.'

'What a fool you were,' I interrupted. Ortheris, bein' neither a menial nor an American, but a free man, had no excuse for yelping.

'That's exactly what Terence said. I wonder you set it the same way so pat if 'e 'asn't been talkin' to you. 'E sez to me—"You ought to 'ave more sense," 'e sez, "at your time of life. What differ do it make to you," 'e sez, "whether 'e 'as a commission or no commission? That's none o' your affair. It's between man an' man," 'e sez, "if 'e 'eld a general's commission. Moreover," 'e sez, "you don't look 'andsome 'oppin' about on your

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'ind legs like that. Take him away, Jock." Then 'e went inside, an' that's all I got outer Terence. Jock, 'e sez as slow as a march in slow time,—“Stanley,” 'e sez, “that young beggar didn't go for to 'it you.” “I don't give a damn whether 'e did or 'e didn't. 'It me 'e did,” I sez. “Then you've only got to report to Brander,” sez Jock. “What d'yer take me for?” I sez, as I was so mad I nearly 'it Jock. An' he got me by the neck an' shoved my 'ead into a bucket o' water in the cook-'ouse an' then we went back to the Fort, an' I give Samuelson a little more trouble with 'is kit. 'E sez to me, “I haven't been strook without 'ittin' back.” “Well, you're goin' to be now,” I sez, an' I give 'im one or two for 'isself, an' arxed 'im very polite to 'it back, but he didn't. I'd ha' killed 'im if 'e 'ad. That done me a lot o' good.

‘Oules 'e didn't make no show for some days,—not till after you was gone; an' I was feelin' sick an' miserable, an' didn't know what I wanted, 'cept to black his little eyes good. I 'oped 'e might send me some money for my tunic. Then I'd ha' had it out with him on p'rade and took my chance. Terence was in 'orspital still, you see, an' 'e wouldn't give me no advice.

‘The day after you left, Oules come across me carryin' a bucket on fatigue, an' 'e sez to me very quietly, “Ortheris, you've got to come out shootin' with me,” 'e sez. I felt like to bunging the bucket in 'is eye, but I didn't. I got ready to go instead. Oh, 'e's a gentleman! We went out together, neither sayin' nothin' to the other till we was well out into the jungle beyond the river with 'igh grass all round,—pretty near that place where I went off my 'ead with you. Then 'e puts his gun down an' sez very quietly: “Ortheris, I strook you on p'rade,” 'e sez. “Yes, sir,” sez I, “you did.” “I've

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been studying it out by myself," 'e sez. "Oh, you 'ave, 'ave you?" sez I to myself, "an a nice time you've been about it, you bun-faced little beggar." "Yes, sir," sez I. "What made you screen me?" 'e sez. "I don't know," I sez, an' no more I did, nor do. "I can't ask you to exchange," 'e sez. "An' I don't want to exchange myself," sez 'e. "What's comin' now?" I thinks to myself. "Yes, sir," sez I. He looks round at the 'igh grass all about, an' 'e sez to himself more than to me,—“I've got to go through it alone, by myself!” 'E looked so queer for a minute that, s'elp me, I thought the little beggar was going to pray. Then he turned round again an' 'e sez, "What do you think yourself?" 'e sez. "I don't quite see what you mean, sir," I sez. "What would you like?" 'e sez. An' I thought for a minute 'e was goin' to give me money, but 'e run 'is 'and up to the top-button of 'is shootin' coat an' loosed it. "Thank you, sir," I sez. "I'd like that very well," I sez, an' both our coats was off an' put down.'

'Hooray!' I shouted incautiously.

'Don't make a noise on the butts,' said Oules from the shooting-place. 'It puts the men off.'

I apologised, and Ortheris went on.

'Our coats was off, an' 'e sez, "Are you ready?" sez 'e. "Come on then." I come on, a bit uncertain at first, but he took me one under the chin that warmed me up. I wanted to mark the little beggar an' I hit high, but he went an' jabbed me over the heart like a good one. He wasn't so strong as me, but he knew more, an' in about two minutes I calls "Time." 'E steps back,—it was in-fightin' then: "Come on when you're ready," 'e sez; and when I had my wind I come on again, an' I got 'im one on the nose that painted 'is little aris-

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tocratic white shirt for 'im. That fetched 'im, an' I knew it quicker nor light. He come all round me, close-fightin', goin' steady for my heart. I held on all I could an' split 'is ear, but then I began to hiccup, an' the game was up. I come in to feel if I could throw 'im, an' 'e got me one on the mouth that downed me an'—look 'ere!

Ortheris raised the left corner of his upper lip. An eye-tooth was wanting.

'E stood over me an' 'e sez, "Have you 'ad enough?" 'e sez. "Thank you, I 'ave," sez I. He took my 'and an' pulled me up, an' I was pretty shook. "Now," 'e sez, "I'll apologise for 'ittin' you. It was all my fault," 'e sez, "an' it wasn't meant for you." "I knowed that, sir," I sez, "an' there's no need for no apology." "Then it's an accident," 'e sez; "an' you must let me pay for the coat; else it'll be stopp'd out o' your pay." I wouldn't ha' took the money before, but I did then. 'E give me ten rupees,—enough to pay for the coat twice over, an' we went down to the river to wash our faces, which was well marked. His was special. Then he sez to himself, sputterin' the water out of 'is mouth, "I wonder if I done right?" 'e sez. "Yes, sir," sez I; "there's no fear about that." "It's all well for you," 'e sez, "but what about the comp'ny?" "Beggin' your pardon, sir," I sez, "I don't think the comp'ny will give no trouble." Then we went shootin', an' when we come back I was feelin' as chirpy as a cricket, an' I took an' rolled Samuelson up an' down the veranda, an' give out to the comp'ny that the difficulty between me an' Lieutenant Oules was satisfactory put a stop to. I told Jock, o' course, an' Terence. Jock didn't say nothing, but Terence 'e sez: "You're a pair, you two. An', begad, I

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don't know which was the better man." There ain't nothin' wrong with Oules. 'E's a gentleman all over, an' 'e's come on as much as B Comp'ny. I lay 'e'd lose 'is commission, tho', if it come out that 'e'd been fightin' with a private. Ho! ho! Fightin' all an afternoon with a bloomin' private like me! What do you think?' he added, brushing the breech of his rifle.

'I think what the umpires said at the sham fight; both sides deserve great credit. But I wish you'd tell me what made you save him in the first place.'

'I was pretty sure that 'e 'adn't meant it for me, though that wouldn't ha' made no difference if 'e'd been copped for it. An' 'e was that young too that it wouldn't ha' been fair. Besides, if I had ha' done that I'd ha' missed the fight, and I'd ha' felt bad all my time. Don't you see it that way, sir?'

'It was your right to get him cashiered if you chose,' I insisted.

'My right!' Ortheris answered with deep scorn. 'My right! I ain't a recruity to go whinin' about my rights to this an' my rights to that, just as if I couldn't look after myself. My rights! 'Strewth A'mighty! I'm a man.'

The last squad were finishing their shots in a storm of low-voiced chaff. Oules withdrew to a little distance in order to leave the men at ease, and I saw his face in the full sunlight for a moment, before he hitched up his sword, got his men together, and marched them back to barracks. It was all right. The boy was proven.

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(1894)

And if ye doubt the tale I tell,
Steer through the South Pacific swell;
Go where the branching coral hives
Unending strife of endless lives,
Where, leagued about the 'wildered boat,
The rainbow jellies fill and float;
And, lilting where the laver lingers,
The starfish trips on all her fingers;
Where, 'neath his myriad spines ashock,
The sea-egg ripples down the rock;
An orange wonder dimly guessed,
From darkness where the cuttles rest,
Moored o'er the darker deeps that hide
The blind white Sea-snake and his bride
Who, drowsing, nose the long-lost ships
Let down through darkness to their lips.
'The Palms.'

ONCE a priest, always a priest; once a mason, always a mason; but once a journalist, always and for ever a journalist.

There were three of us, all newspaper men, the only passengers on a little tramp steamer that ran where her owners told her to go. She had once been in the Bilbao

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iron ore business, had been lent to the Spanish Government for service at Manila; and was ending her days in the Cape Town coolie-trade, with occasional trips to Madagascar and even as far as England. We found her going to Southampton in ballast, and shipped in her because the fares were nominal. There was Keller, of an American paper, on his way back to the States from palace executions in Madagascar; there was a burly half-Dutchman, called Zuyland, who owned and edited a paper up country near Johannesburg; and there was myself, who had solemnly put away all journalism, vowing to forget that I had ever known the difference between an imprint and a stereo advertisement.

Ten minutes after Keller spoke to me, as the 'Rathmines' cleared Cape Town, I had forgotten the aloofness I desired to feign, and was in heated discussion on the immorality of expanding telegrams beyond a certain fixed point. Then Zuyland came out of his cabin, and we were all at home instantly, because we were men of the same profession needing no introduction. We annexed the boat formally, broke open the passengers' bath-room door—on the Manila lines the Dons do not wash—cleaned out the orange-peel and cigar-ends at the bottom of the bath, hired a Lascar to shave us throughout the voyage, and then asked each other's names.

Three ordinary men would have quarrelled through sheer boredom before they reached Southampton. We, by virtue of our craft, were anything but ordinary men. A large percentage of the tales of the world, the thirty-nine that cannot be told to ladies and the one that can, are common property coming of a common stock. We told them all as a matter of form, with all their local and specific variants which are surprising. Then came, in

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the intervals of steady card-play, more personal histories of adventure and things seen and suffered: panics among white folk, when the blind terror ran from man to man on the Brooklyn Bridge, and the people crushed each other to death they knew not why; fires, and faces that opened and shut their mouths horribly at red-hot window frames; wrecks in frost and snow, reported from the sleet-sheathed rescue-tug at the risk of frost-bite; long rides after diamond thieves; skirmishes on the veldt and in municipal committees with the Boers; glimpses of lazy tangled Cape politics and the mule-rule in the Transvaal; card-tales, horse-tales, woman-tales, by the score and the half hundred; till the first mate, who had seen more than us all put together, but lacked words to clothe his tales with, sat open-mouthed far into the dawn.

When the tales were done we picked up cards till a curious hand or a chance remark made one or other of us say, 'That reminds me of a man who—or a business which—' and the anecdotes would continue while the 'Rathmines' kicked her way northward through the warm water.

In the morning of one specially warm night we three were sitting immediately in front of the wheel-house, where an old Swedish boatswain whom we called 'Frithiof the Dane' was at the wheel, pretending that he could not hear our stories. Once or twice Frithiof spun the spokes curiously, and Keller lifted his head from a long chair to ask, 'What is it? Can't you get any steerage-way on her?'

'There is a feel in the water,' said Frithiof, 'that I cannot understand. I think that we run downhill or somethings. She steers bad this morning.'

Nobody seems to know the laws that govern the pulse

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of the big waters. Sometimes even a landsman can tell that the solid ocean is atilt, and that the ship is working herself up a long unseen slope; and sometimes the captain says, when neither full steam nor fair wind justifies the length of a day's run, that the ship is sagging downhill; but how these ups and downs come about has not yet been settled authoritatively.

'No, it is a following sea,' said Frithiof; 'and with a following sea you shall not get good steerage-way.'

The sea was as smooth as a duck-pond, except for a regular oily swell. As I looked over the side to see where it might be following us from, the sun rose in a perfectly clear sky and struck the water with its light so sharply that it seemed as though the sea should clang like a burnished gong. The wake of the screw and the little white streak cut by the log-line hanging over the stern were the only marks on the water as far as eye could reach.

Keller rolled out of his chair and went aft to get a pineapple from the ripening stock that was hung inside the after awning.

'Frithiof, the log-line has got tired of swimming. It's coming home,' he drawled.

'What?' said Frithiof, his voice jumping several octaves.

'Coming home,' Keller repeated, leaning over the stern. I ran to his side and saw the log-line, which till then had been drawn tense over the stern railing, slacken, loop, and come up off the port quarter. Frithiof called up the speaking-tube to the bridge, and the bridge answered, 'Yes, nine knots.' Then Frithiof spoke again, and the answer was, 'What do you want of the skipper?' and Frithiof bellowed, 'Call him up.'

By this time Zuyland, Keller, and myself had caught

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something of Frithiof's excitement, for any emotion on shipboard is most contagious. The captain ran out of his cabin, spoke to Frithiof, looked at the log-line, jumped on the bridge, and in a minute we felt the steamer swing round as Frithiof turned her.

'Going back to Cape Town?' said Keller.

Frithiof did not answer, but tore away at the wheel. Then he beckoned us three to help, and we held the wheel down till the 'Rathmines' answered it, and we found ourselves looking into the white of our own wake, with the still oily sea tearing past our bows, though we were not going more than half steam ahead.

The captain stretched out his arm from the bridge and shouted. A minute later I would have given a great deal to have shouted too, for one-half of the sea seemed to shoulder itself above the other half, and came on in the shape of a hill. There was neither crest, comb, nor curl-over to it; nothing but black water with little waves chasing each other about the flanks. I saw it stream past and on a level with the 'Rathmines' bow-plates before the steamer hove up her bulk to rise, and I argued that this would be the last of all earthly voyages for me. Then we lifted for ever and ever and ever, till I heard Keller saying in my ear, 'The bowels of the deep, good Lord!' and the 'Rathmines' stood poised, her screw racing and drumming on the slope of a hollow that stretched downwards for a good half-mile.

We went down that hollow, nose under for the most part, and the air smelt wet and muddy, like that of an emptied aquarium. There was a second hill to climb: I saw that much; but the water came aboard and carried me aft till it jammed me against the wheel-house door, and before I could catch breath or clear my eyes again

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we were rolling to and fro in torn water, with the scuppers pouring like eaves in a thunder-storm.

‘There were three waves,’ said Keller; ‘and the stokehold’s flooded.’

The firemen were on deck waiting, apparently, to be drowned. The engineer came and dragged them below, and the crew, gasping, began to work the clumsy Board of Trade pump. That showed nothing serious, and when I understood that the ‘Rathmines’ was really on the water, and not beneath it, I asked what had happened.

‘The captain says it was a blow-up under the sea—a volcano,’ said Keller.

‘It hasn’t warmed anything,’ I said. I was feeling bitterly cold, and cold was almost unknown in those waters. I went below to change my clothes, and when I came up everything was wiped out in clinging white fog.

‘Are there going to be any more surprises?’ said Keller to the captain.

‘I don’t know. Be thankful you’re alive, gentlemen. That’s a tidal wave thrown up by a volcano. Probably the bottom of the sea has been lifted a few feet somewhere or other. I can’t quite understand this cold spell. Our sea-thermometer says the surface water is 44 degrees, and it should be 68 degrees at least.’

‘It’s abominable,’ said Keller, shivering. ‘But hadn’t you better attend to the fog-horn? It seems to me that I heard something.’

‘Heard! Good heavens!’ said the captain from the bridge, ‘I should think you did.’ He pulled the string of our fog-horn, which was a weak one. It sputtered and choked, because the stokehold was full of water and the fires were half-drowned, and at last gave out a moan.

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It was answered from the fog by one of the most appalling steam-sirens I have ever heard. Keller turned as white as I did, for the fog, the cold fog, was upon us, and any man may be forgiven for fearing a death he cannot see.

‘Give her steam there!’ said the captain to the engine-room. ‘Steam for the whistle, if we have to go dead slow.’

We bellowed again, and the damp dripped off the awnings on to the deck as we listened for the reply. It seemed to be astern this time, but much nearer than before.

‘The “Pembroke Castle” on us!’ said Keller; and then, viciously, ‘Well, thank God, we shall sink her too.’

‘It’s a side-wheel steamer,’ I whispered. ‘Can’t you hear the paddles?’

This time we whistled and roared till the steam gave out, and the answer nearly deafened us. There was a sound of frantic threshing in the water, apparently about fifty yards away, and something shot past in the whiteness that looked as though it were gray and red.

‘The “Pembroke Castle” bottom up,’ said Keller, who, being a journalist, always sought for explanations. ‘That’s the colours of a Castle liner. We’re in for a big thing.’

‘The sea is bewitched,’ said Frithiof from the wheel-house. ‘There are two steamers!’

Another siren sounded on our bow, and the little steamer rolled in the wash of something that had passed unseen.

‘We’re evidently in the middle of a fleet,’ said Keller quietly. ‘If one doesn’t run us down, the other will. Phew! What in creation is that?’

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I sniffed, for there was a poisonous rank smell in the cold air—a smell that I had smelt before.

‘If I was on land I should say that it was an alligator. It smells like musk,’ I answered.

‘Not ten thousand alligators could make that smell,’ said Zuyland; ‘I have smelt them.’

‘Bewitched! Bewitched!’ said Frithiof. ‘The sea she is turned upside down, and we are walking along the bottom.’

Again the ‘Rathmines’ rolled in the wash of some unseen ship, and a silver-gray wave broke over the bow, leaving on the deck a sheet of sediment—the gray broth that has its place in the fathomless deeps of the sea. A sprinkling of the wave fell on my face, and it was so cold that it stung as boiling water stings. The dead and most untouched deep water of the sea had been heaved to the top by the submarine volcano—the chill still water that kills all life and smells of desolation and emptiness. We did not need either the blinding fog or that indescribable smell of musk to make us unhappy—we were shivering with cold and wretchedness where we stood.

‘The hot air on the cold water makes this fog,’ said the captain; ‘it ought to clear in a little time.’

‘Whistle, oh, whistle, and let’s get out of it!’ said Keller.

The captain whistled again, and far and far astern the invisible twin steam-sirens answered us. Their blasting shriek grew louder, till at last it seemed to tear out of the fog just above our quarter, and I cowered while the ‘Rathmines’ plunged bows under on a double swell that crossed.

‘No more,’ said Frithiof, ‘it is not good any more. Let us get away, in the name of God.’

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‘Now if a torpedo-boat with a “City of Paris” siren went mad and broke her moorings and hired a friend to help her, it’s just conceivable that we might be carried as we are now. Otherwise this thing is—’

The last words died on Keller’s lips, his eyes began to start from his head, and his jaw fell. Some six or seven feet above the port bulwarks, framed in fog, and as utterly unsupported as the full moon, hung a Face. It was not human, and it certainly was not animal, for it did not belong to this earth as known to man. The mouth was open, revealing a ridiculously tiny tongue—as absurd as the tongue of an elephant; there were tense wrinkles of white skin at the angles of the drawn lips, white feelers like those of a barbel sprang from the lower jaw, and there was no sign of teeth within the mouth. But the horror of the face lay in the eyes, for those were sightless—white, in sockets as white as scraped bone, and blind. Yet for all this the face, wrinkled as the mask of a lion is drawn in Assyrian sculpture, was alive with rage and terror. One long white feeler touched our bulwarks. Then the face disappeared with the swiftness of a blindworm popping into its burrow, and the next thing that I remember is my own voice in my own ears, saying gravely to the mainmast, ‘But the air-bladder ought to have been forced out of its mouth, you know.’

Keller came up to me, ashy white. He put his hand into his pocket, took a cigar, bit it, dropped it, thrust his shaking thumb into his mouth and mumbled, ‘The giant gooseberry and the raining frogs! Gimme a light—gimme a light! Say, gimme a light.’ A little bead of blood dropped from his thumb-joint.

I respected the motive, though the manifestation was

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absurd. 'Stop, you'll bite your thumb off,' I said, and Keller laughed brokenly as he picked up his cigar. Only Zuyland, leaning over the port bulwarks, seemed self-possessed. He declared later that he was very sick.

'We've seen it,' he said, turning round. 'That is it.'

'What?' said Keller, chewing the unlighted cigar.

As he spoke the fog was blown into shreds, and we saw the sea, gray with mud, rolling on every side of us and empty of all life. Then in one spot it bubbled and became like the pot of ointment that the Bible speaks of. From that wide-ringed trouble a Thing came up—a gray and red Thing with a neck—a Thing that bellowed and writhed in pain. Frithiof drew in his breath and held it till the red letters of the ship's name, woven across his jersey, straggled and opened out as though they had been type badly set. Then he said with a little cluck in his throat, 'Ah me! It is blind. Hurilla! That thing is blind,' and a murmur of pity went through us all, for we could see that the thing on the water was blind and in pain. Something had gashed and cut the great sides cruelly and the blood was spurting out. The gray ooze of the undermost sea lay in the monstrous wrinkles of the back, and poured away in sluices. The blind white head flung back and battered the wounds, and the body in its torment rose clear of the red and gray waves till we saw a pair of quivering shoulders streaked with weed and rough with shells, but as white in the clear spaces as the hairless, maneless, blind, toothless head. Afterwards, came a dot on the horizon and the sound of a shrill scream, and it was as though a shuttle shot all across the sea in one breath, and a second head and neck tore through the levels, driving a whispering wall of water to right and left. The two Things met—the one

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untouched and the other in its death-throe—male and female, we said, the female coming to the male. She circled round him bellowing, and laid her neck across the curve of his great turtle-back, and he disappeared under water for an instant, but flung up again, grunting in agony while the blood ran. Once the entire head and neck shot clear of the water and stiffened, and I heard Keller saying, as though he was watching a street accident, ‘Give him air. For God’s sake, give him air.’ Then the death-struggle began, with crampings and twistings and jerkings of the white bulk to and fro, till our little steamer rolled again, and each gray wave coated her plates with the gray slime. The sun was clear, there was no wind, and we watched, the whole crew, stokers and all, in wonder and pity, but chiefly pity. The Thing was so helpless, and, save for his mate, so alone. No human eye should have beheld him; it was monstrous and indecent to exhibit him there in trade waters between atlas degrees of latitude. He had been spewed up, mangled and dying, from his rest on the sea-floor, where he might have lived till the Judgment Day, and we saw the tides of his life go from him as an angry tide goes out across rocks in the teeth of a landward gale. His mate lay rocking on the water a little distance off, bellowing continually, and the smell of musk came down upon the ship making us cough.

At last the battle for life ended in a batter of coloured seas. We saw the writhing neck fall like a flail, the carcase turn sideways, showing the glint of a white belly and the inset of a gigantic hind leg or flipper. Then all sank, and sea boiled over it, while the mate swam round and round, darting her head in every direction. Though we might have feared that she would attack the steamer,

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no power on earth could have drawn any one of us from our places that hour. We watched, holding our breaths. The mate paused in her search; we could hear the wash beating along her sides; reared her neck as high as she could reach, blind and lonely in all that loneliness of the sea, and sent one desperate bellow booming across the swells as an oyster-shell skips across a pond. Then she made off to the westward, the sun shining on the white head and the wake behind it, till nothing was left to see but a little pin-point of silver on the horizon. We stood on our course again; and the 'Rathmines,' coated with the sea-sediment from bow to stern, looked like a ship made gray with terror.

• • • • •
'We must pool our notes,' was the first coherent remark from Keller. 'We're three trained journalists—we hold absolutely the biggest scoop on record. Start fair.'

I objected to this. Nothing is gained by collaboration in journalism when all deal with the same facts, so we went to work each according to his own lights. Keller triple-headed his account, talked about our 'gallant captain,' and wound up with an allusion to American enterprise in that it was a citizen of Dayton, Ohio, that had seen the sea-serpent. This sort of thing would have discredited the Creation, much more a mere sea tale, but as a specimen of the picture-writing of a half-civilised people it was very interesting. Zuyland took a heavy column and a half, giving approximate lengths and breadths, and the whole list of the crew whom he had sworn on oath to testify to his facts. There was nothing fantastic or flamboyant in Zuyland. I wrote three-quarters of a leaded bourgeois column, roughly speaking,

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and refrained from putting any journalese into it for reasons that had begun to appear to me.

Keller was insolent with joy. He was going to cable from Southampton to the New York 'World,' mail his account to America on the same day, paralyse London with his three columns of loosely knitted headlines, and generally efface the earth. 'You'll see how I work a big scoop when I get it,' he said.

'Is this your first visit to England?' I asked.

'Yes,' said he. 'You don't seem to appreciate the beauty of our scoop. It's pyramidal—the death of the sea-serpent! Good heavens alive, man, it's the biggest thing ever vouchsafed to a paper!'

'Curious to think that it will never appear in any paper, isn't it?' I said.

Zuyland was near me, and he nodded quickly.

'What do you mean?' said Keller. 'If you're enough of a Britisher to throw this thing away, I shan't. I thought you were a newspaper-man.'

'I am. That's why I know. Don't be an ass, Keller. Remember, I'm seven hundred years your senior, and what your grandchildren may learn five hundred years hence, I learned from my grandfathers about five hundred years ago. You won't do it, because you can't.'

This conversation was held in open sea, where everything seems possible, some hundred miles from Southampton. We passed the Needles Light at dawn, and the lifting day showed the stucco villas on the green and the awful orderliness of England—line upon line, wall upon wall, solid store dock and monolithic pier. We waited an hour in the Customs shed, and there was ample time for the effect to soak in.

'Now, Keller, you face the music. The "Havel"

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goes out to-day. Mail by her, and I'll take you to the telegraph-office,' I said.

I heard Keller gasp as the influence of the land closed about him, cowing him as they say Newmarket Heath cows a young horse unused to open courses.

'I want to retouch my stuff. Suppose we wait till we get to London?' he said.

Zuyland, by the way, had torn up his account and thrown it overboard that morning early. His reasons were my reasons.

In the train Keller began to revise his copy, and every time that he looked at the trim little fields, the red villas, and the embankments of the line, the blue pencil plunged remorselessly through the slips. He appeared to have dredged the dictionary for adjectives. I could think of none that he had not used. Yet he was a perfectly sound poker-player and never showed more cards than were sufficient to take the pool.

'Aren't you going to leave him a single bellow?' I asked sympathetically. 'Remember, everything goes in the States, from a trouser-button to a double-eagle.'

'That's just the curse of it,' said Keller below his breath. 'We've played 'em for suckers so often that when it comes to the golden truth—I'd like to try this on a London paper. You have first call there, though.'

'Not in the least. I'm not touching the thing in our papers. I shall be happy to leave 'em all to you; but surely you'll cable it home?'

'No. Not if I can make the scoop here and see the Britishers sit up.'

'You won't do it with three columns of slushy headlines, believe me. They don't sit up as quickly as some people.'

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‘I’m beginning to think that too. Does nothing make any difference in this country?’ he said, looking out of the window. ‘How old is that farmhouse?’

‘New. It can’t be more than two hundred years at the most.’

‘Um. Fields, too?’

‘That hedge there must have been clipped for about eighty years.’

‘Labour cheap—eh?’

‘Pretty much. Well, I suppose you’d like to try the “Times,” wouldn’t you?’

‘No,’ said Keller, looking at Winchester Cathedral. ‘Might as well try to electrify a haystack. And to think that the “World” would take three columns and ask for more—with illustrations too! It’s sickening.’

‘But the “Times” might,’ I began.

Keller flung his paper across the carriage, and it opened in its austere majesty of solid type—opened with the crackle of an encyclopædia.

‘Might! You might work your way through the bow-plates of a cruiser. Look at that first page!’

‘It strikes you that way, does it?’ I said. ‘Then I’d recommend you to try a light and frivolous journal.’

‘With a thing like this of mine—of ours? It’s sacred history!’

I showed him a paper which I conceived would be after his own heart, in that it was modelled on American lines.

‘That’s homey,’ he said, ‘but it’s not the real thing. Now, I should like one of these fat old “Times” columns. Probably there’d be a bishop in the office, though.’

When we reached London Keller disappeared in the direction of the Strand. What his experiences may

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have been I cannot tell, but it seems that he invaded the office of an evening paper at 11.45 a. m. (I told him English editors were most idle at that hour), and mentioned my name as that of a witness to the truth of his story.

‘I was nearly fired out,’ he said furiously at lunch. ‘As soon as I mentioned you, the old man said that I was to tell you that they didn’t want any more of your practical jokes, and that you knew the hours to call if you had anything to sell, and that they’d see you condemned before they helped to puff one of your infernal yarns in advance. Say, what record do you hold for truth in this country, anyway?’

‘A beauty. You ran up against it, that’s all. Why don’t you leave the English papers alone and cable to New York? Everything goes over there.’

‘Can’t you see that’s just why?’ he repeated.

‘I saw it a long time ago. You don’t intend to cable, then?’

‘Yes, I do,’ he answered, in the over-emphatic voice of one who does not know his own mind.

That afternoon I walked him abroad and about, over the streets that run between the pavements like channels of grooved and tongued lava, over the bridges that are made of enduring stone, through subways floored and sided with yard-thick concrete, between houses that are never rebuilt, and by river-steps hewn, to the eye, from the living rock. A black fog chased us into Westminster Abbey, and, standing there in the darkness, I could hear the wings of the dead centuries circling round the head of Litchfield A. Keller, journalist, of Dayton, Ohio, U. S. A., whose mission it was to make the Britishers sit up.

He stumbled gasping into the thick gloom, and the roar of the traffic came to his bewildered ears.

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‘Let’s go to the telegraph-office and cable,’ I said. ‘Can’t you hear the New York “World” crying for news of the great sea-serpent, blind, white, and smelling of musk, stricken to death by a submarine volcano, and assisted by his loving wife to die in mid-ocean, as visualised by an American citizen, the breezy, newsy, brainy newspaper man of Dayton, Ohio? ’Rah for the Buckeye State. Step lively! Both gates! Szz! Boom! Aah!’ Keller was a Princeton man, and he seemed to need encouragement.

‘You’ve got me on your own ground,’ said he, tugging at his overcoat pocket. He pulled out his copy, with the cable forms—for he had written out his telegram—and put them all into my hand, groaning, ‘I pass. If I hadn’t come to your cursed country!—If I’d sent it off at Southampton!—If I ever get you west of the Alleghanies! If—’

‘Never mind, Keller. It isn’t your fault. It’s the fault of your country. If you had been seven hundred years older you’d have done what I am going to do.’

‘What are you going to do?’

‘Tell it as a lie.’

‘Fiction?’ This with the full-blooded disgust of a journalist for the illegitimate branch of the profession.

‘You can call it that if you like. I shall call it a lie.’

And a lie it has become; for Truth is a naked lady, and if by accident she is drawn up from the bottom of the sea, it behoves a gentleman either to give her a print petticoat or to turn his face to the wall and vow that he did not see.

THE LOST LEGION

(1891)

WHEN the Indian Mutiny broke out, and a little time before the siege of Delhi, a regiment of Native Irregular Horse was stationed at Peshawur on the frontier of India. That regiment caught what John Lawrence called at the time 'the prevalent mania,' and would have thrown in its lot with the mutineers had it been allowed to do so. The chance never came, for, as the regiment swept off down south, it was headed up by a remnant of an English corps into the hills of Afghanistan, and there the newly-conquered tribesmen turned against it as wolves turn against buck. It was hunted for the sake of its arms and accoutrements from hill to hill, from ravine to ravine, up and down the dried beds of rivers and round the shoulders of bluffs, till it disappeared as water sinks in the sand—this officerless, rebel regiment. The only trace left of its existence to-day is a nominal roll drawn up in neat round hand and countersigned by an officer who called himself 'Adjutant, late—Irregular Cavalry.' The paper is yellow with years and dirt, but on the back of it you can still read a pencil note by John Lawrence, to this effect: 'See that the two native officers who remained loyal are not deprived of their estates.—J. L.' Of six hundred and fifty sabres only two stood strain, and John Law-

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rence in the midst of all the agony of the first months of the Mutiny found time to think about their merits.

That was more than thirty years ago, and the tribesmen across the Afghan border who helped to annihilate the regiment are now old men. Sometimes a graybeard speaks of his share in the massacre. 'They came,' he will say, 'across the border, very proud, calling upon us to rise and kill the English, and go down to the sack of Delhi. But we who had just been conquered by the same English knew that they were over bold, and that the Government could account easily for those down-country dogs. This Hindustani regiment, therefore, we treated with fair words, and kept standing in one place till the redcoats came after them very hot and angry. Then this regiment ran forward a little more into our hills to avoid the wrath of the English, and we lay upon their flanks watching from the sides of the hills till we were well assured that their path was lost behind them. Then we came down, for we desired their clothes, and their bridles, and their rifles, and their boots—more especially their boots. That was a great killing—done slowly.' Here the old man will rub his nose, and shake his long snaky locks, and lick his bearded lips, and grin till the yellow tooth-stumps show. 'Yes, we killed them because we needed their gear, and we knew that their lives had been forfeited to God on account of their sin—the sin of treachery to the salt which they had eaten. They rode up and down the valleys, stumbling and rocking in their saddles, and howling for mercy. We drove them slowly like cattle till they were all assembled in one place, the flat wide valley of Sheor Kot. Many had died from want of water, but there still were many left, and they could not make any stand. We

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went among them, pulling them down with our hands two at a time, and our boys who were new to the sword killed them. My share of the plunder was such and such—so many guns, and so many saddles. The guns were good in those days. Now we steal the Government rifles, and despise smooth-bores. Yes, beyond doubt we wiped that regiment from off the face of the earth, and even the memory of the deed is now dying. But men say—’

At this point the tale would stop abruptly, and it was impossible to find out what men said across the border. The Afghans were always a secretive race, and vastly preferred doing something wicked to saying anything at all. They would be quiet and well-behaved for months, till one night, without word or warning, they would rush a police-post, cut the throats of a constable or two, dash through a village, carry away three or four women, and withdraw, in the red glare of burning thatch, driving the cattle and goats before them to their own desolate hills. The Indian Government would become almost tearful on these occasions. First it would say, ‘Please be good and we’ll forgive you.’ The tribe concerned in the latest depredation would collectively put its thumb to its nose and answer rudely. Then the Government would say: ‘Hadh’n’t you better pay up a little money for those few corpses you left behind you the other night?’ Here the tribe would temporise, and lie and bully, and some of the younger men, merely to show contempt of authority, would raid another police-post and fire into some frontier mud fort, and, if lucky, kill a real English officer. Then the Government would say: ‘Observe; if you really persist in this line of conduct you will be hurt.’ If the tribe knew exactly what was going on in India, it would

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apologise or be rude, according as it learned whether the Government was busy with other things, or able to devote its full attention to their performances. Some of the tribes knew to one corpse how far to go. Others became excited, lost their heads, and told the Government to come on. With sorrow and tears, and one eye on the British taxpayer at home, who insisted on regarding these exercises as brutal wars of annexation, the Government would prepare an expensive little field-brigade and some guns, and send all up into the hills to chase the wicked tribe out of the valleys, where the corn grew, into the hill-tops where there was nothing to eat. The tribe would turn out in full strength and enjoy the campaign, for they knew that their women would never be touched, that their wounded would be nursed, not mutilated, and that as soon as each man's bag of corn was spent they could surrender and palaver with the English General just as though they had been a real enemy. Afterwards, years afterwards, they would pay the blood-money, dribble by dribble, to the Government and tell their children how they had slain the redcoats by thousands. The only drawback to this kind of picnic-war was the weakness of the redcoats for solemnly blowing up with powder their fortified towers and keeps. This the tribes always considered mean.

Chief among the leaders of the smaller tribes—the little clans who knew to a penny the expense of moving white troops against them—was a priest-bandit-chief whom we will call the Gulla Kutta Mullah. His enthusiasm for border murder as an art was almost dignified. He would cut down a mail-runner from pure wantonness, or bombard a mud fort with rifle fire when he knew that our men needed to sleep. In his leisure moments he

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would go on circuit among his neighbours, and try to incite other tribes to devilry. Also, he kept a kind of hotel for fellow-outlaws in his own village, which lay in a valley called Bersund. Any respectable murderer on that section of the frontier was sure to lie up at Bersund, for it was reckoned an exceedingly safe place. The sole entry to it ran through a narrow gorge which could be converted into a death-trap in five minutes. It was surrounded by high hills, reckoned inaccessible to all save born mountaineers, and here the Gulla Kutta Mullah lived in great state, the head of a colony of mud and stone huts, and in each mud hut hung some portion of a red uniform and the plunder of dead men. The Government particularly wished for his capture, and once invited him formally to come out and be hanged on account of a few of the murders in which he had taken a direct part. He replied:—

‘I am only twenty miles, as the crow flies, from your border. Come and fetch me.’

‘Some day we will come,’ said the Government, ‘and hanged you will be.’

The Gulla Kutta Mullah let the matter from his mind. He knew that the patience of the Government was as long as a summer day; but he did not realise that its arm was as long as a winter night. Months afterwards, when there was peace on the border, and all India was quiet, the Indian Government turned in its sleep and remembered the Gulla Kutta Mullah at Bersund with his thirteen outlaws. The movement against him of one single regiment—which the telegrams would have translated as war—would have been highly impolitic. This was a time for silence and speed, and, above all, absence of bloodshed.

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You must know that all along the north-west frontier of India there is spread a force of some thirty thousand foot and horse, whose duty it is quietly and unostentatiously to shepherd the tribes in front of them. They move up and down, and down and up, from one desolate little post to another; they are ready to take the field at ten minutes' notice; they are always half in and half out of a difficulty somewhere along the monotonous line; their lives are as hard as their own muscles, and the papers never say anything about them. It was from this force that the Government picked its men.

One night at a station where the mounted Night Patrol fire as they challenge, and the wheat rolls in great blue-green waves under our cold northern moon, the officers were playing billiards in the mud-walled clubhouse, when orders came to them that they were to go on parade at once for a night-drill. They grumbled, and went to turn out their men—a hundred English troops, let us say, two hundred Goorkhas, and about a hundred cavalry of the finest native cavalry in the world.

When they were on the parade-ground, it was explained to them in whispers that they must set off at once across the hills to Bersund. The English troops were to post themselves round the hills at the side of the valley; the Goorkhas would command the gorge and the death-trap, and the cavalry would fetch a long march round and get to the back of the circle of hills, whence, if there were any difficulty, they could charge down on the Mullah's men. But orders were very strict that there should be no fighting and no noise. They were to return in the morning with every round of ammunition intact, and the Mullah and his thirteen outlaws bound in their midst. If they were successful, no one would know or care any-

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thing about their work; but failure meant probably a small border war, in which the Gulla Kutta Mullah would pose as a popular leader against a big bullying power, instead of a common border murderer.

Then there was silence, broken only by the clicking of the compass-needles and snapping of watch-cases, as the heads of columns compared bearings and made appointments for the rendezvous. Five minutes later the parade-ground was empty; the green coats of the Goorkhas and the overcoats of the English troops had faded into the darkness, and the cavalry were cantering away in the face of a blinding drizzle.

What the Goorkhas and the English did will be seen later on. The heavy work lay with the horses, for they had to go far and pick their way clear of habitations. Many of the troopers were natives of that part of the world, ready and anxious to fight against their kin, and some of the officers had made private and unofficial excursions into those hills before. They crossed the border, found a dried river bed, cantered up that, walked through a stony gorge, risked crossing a low hill under cover of the darkness, skirted another hill, leaving their hoof-marks deep in some ploughed ground, felt their way along another watercourse, ran over the neck of a spur, praying that no one would hear their horses grunting, and so worked on in the rain and the darkness, till they had left Bersund and its crater of hills a little behind them, and to the left, and it was time to swing round. The ascent commanding the back of Bersund was steep, and they halted to draw breath in a broad level valley below the height. That is to say, the men reined up, but the horses, blown as they were, refused to halt. There was unchristian language, the worse for being delivered

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in a whisper, and you heard the saddles squeaking in the darkness as the horses plunged.

The subaltern at the rear of one troop turned in his saddle and said very softly:—

‘Carter, what the blessed heavens are you doing at the rear? Bring your men up, man.’

There was no answer, till a trooper replied:—

‘Carter Sahib is forward—not there. There is nothing behind us.’

‘There is,’ said the subaltern. ‘The squadron’s walking on its own tail.’

Then the Major in command moved down to the rear swearing softly and asking for the blood of Lieutenant Halley—the subaltern who had just spoken.

‘Look after your rearguard,’ said the Major. ‘Some of your infernal thieves have got lost. They’re at the head of the squadron, and you’re a several kinds of idiot.’

‘Shall I tell off my men, sir?’ said the subaltern sulkily, for he was feeling wet and cold.

‘Tell ’em off!’ said the Major. ‘Whip ’em off, by Gad! You’re squandering them all over the place. There’s a troop behind you now!’

‘So I was thinking,’ said the subaltern calmly. ‘I have all my men here, sir. Better speak to Carter.’

‘Carter Sahib sends salaam and wants to know why the regiment is stopping,’ said a trooper to Lieutenant Halley.

‘Where under heaven is Carter?’ said the Major.

‘Forward with his troop,’ was the answer.

‘Are we walking in a ring, then, or are we the centre of a blessed brigade?’ said the Major.

By this time there was silence all along the column. The horses were still; but, through the drive of the fine

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rain, men could hear the feet of many horses moving over stony ground.

‘We’re being stalked,’ said Lieutenant Halley.

‘They’ve no horses here. Besides, they’d have fired before this,’ said the Major. ‘It’s—it’s villagers’ ponies.’

‘Then our horses would have neighed and spoilt the attack long ago. They must have been near us for half an hour,’ said the subaltern.

‘Queer that we can’t smell the horses,’ said the Major, damping his finger and rubbing it on his nose as he sniffed up wind.

‘Well, it’s a bad start,’ said the subaltern, shaking the wet from his overcoat. ‘What shall we do, sir?’

‘Get on,’ said the Major. ‘We shall catch it to-night.’

The column moved forward very gingerly for a few paces. Then there was an oath, a shower of blue sparks as shod hooves crashed on small stones, and a man rolled over with a jangle of accoutrements that would have waked the dead.

‘Now we’ve gone and done it,’ said Lieutenant Halley. ‘All the hillside awake, and all the hillside to climb in the face of musketry-fire. This comes of trying to do night-hawk work.’

The trembling trooper picked himself up, and tried to explain that his horse had fallen over one of the little cairns that are built of loose stones on the spot where a man has been murdered. There was no need for reasons. The Major’s big Australian charger blundered next, and the column came to a halt in what seemed to be a very graveyard of little cairns all about two feet high. The manœuvres of the squadron are not reported. Men said that it felt like mounted quadrilles without training and without the music; but at last the horses, breaking

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rank and choosing their own way, walked clear of the cairns, till every man of the squadron re-formed and drew rein a few yards up the slope of the hill. Then, according to Lieutenant Halley, there was another scene very like the one which has been described. The Major and Carter insisted that all the men had not joined rank, and that there were more of them in the rear clicking and blundering among the dead men's cairns. Lieutenant Halley told off his own troopers once again and resigned himself to wait. Later on he told me:—

‘I didn't much know, and I didn't much care what was going on. The row of that trooper falling ought to have scared half the country, and I would take my oath that we were being stalked by a full regiment in the rear, and they were making row enough to rouse all Afghanistan. I sat tight, but nothing happened.’

The mysterious part of the night's work was the silence on the hillside. Everybody knew that the Gulla Kutta Mullah had his outpost huts on the reverse side of the hill, and everybody expected by the time that the Major had sworn himself into a state of quiet that the watchmen there would open fire. When nothing occurred, they said that the gusts of the rain had deadened the sound of the horses, and thanked Providence. At last the Major satisfied himself (a) that he had left no one behind among the cairns, and (b) that he was not being taken in the rear by a large and powerful body of cavalry. The men's tempers were thoroughly spoiled, the horses were lathered and unquiet, and one and all prayed for the daylight.

They set themselves to climb up the hill, each man leading his mount carefully. Before they had covered the lower slopes or the breastplates had begun to tighten,

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a thunder-storm came up behind, rolling across the low hills and drowning any noise less than that of cannon. The first flash of the lightning showed the bare ribs of the ascent, the hill-crest standing steely blue against the black sky, the little falling lines of the rain, and, a few yards to their left flank, an Afghan watch-tower, two-storied, built of stone, and entered by a ladder from the upper story. The ladder was up, and a man with a rifle was leaning from the window. The darkness and the thunder rolled down in an instant, and, when the lull followed, a voice from the watch-tower cried, 'Who goes there?'

The cavalry were very quiet, but each man gripped his carbine and stood beside his horse. Again the voice called, 'Who goes there?' and in a louder key, 'O, brothers, give the alarm!' Now, every man in the cavalry would have died in his long boots sooner than have asked for quarter; but it is a fact that the answer to the second call was a long wail of 'Marf karo! Marf karo!' which means, 'Have mercy! Have mercy!' It came from the climbing regiment.

The cavalry stood dumbfounded, till the big troopers had time to whisper one to another: 'Mir Khan, was that thy voice? Abdullah, didst thou call?' Lieutenant Halley stood beside his charger and waited. So long as no firing was going on he was content. Another flash of lightning showed the horses with heaving flanks and nodding heads, the men, white-eyeballed, glaring beside them, and the stone watch-tower to the left. This time there was no head at the window, and the rude iron-clamped shutter that could turn a rifle bullet was closed.

'Go on, men,' said the Major. 'Get up to the top at any rate.' The squadron toiled forward, the horses

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wagging their tails and the men pulling at the bridles, the stones rolling down the hillside and the sparks flying. Lieutenant Halley declares that he never heard a squadron make so much noise in his life. They scrambled up, he said, as though each horse had eight legs and a spare horse to follow him. Even then there was no sound from the watch-tower, and the men stopped exhausted on the ridge that overlooked the pit of darkness in which the village of Bersund lay. Girths were loosed, curb-chains shifted, and saddles adjusted, and the men dropped down among the stones. Whatever might happen now, they had the upper ground of any attack.

The thunder ceased, and with it the rain, and the soft thick darkness of a winter night before the dawn covered them all. Except for the sound of falling water among the ravines below, everything was still. They heard the shutter of the watch-tower below them thrown back with a clang, and the voice of the watcher calling: 'O Hafiz Ullah!'

The echoes took up the call, 'La-la-la!' And an answer came from the watch-tower hidden round the curve of the hill, 'What is it, Shahbaz Khan?'

Shahbaz Khan replied in the high-pitched voice of the mountaineer: 'Hast thou seen?'

The answer came back: 'Yes. God deliver us from all evil spirits!'

There was a pause, and then: 'Hafiz Ullah, I am alone! Come to me!'

'Shahbaz Khan, I am alone also, but I dare not leave my post!'

'That is a lie; thou art afraid.'

A longer pause followed, and then: 'I am afraid. Be silent! They are below us still. Pray to God and sleep.'

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The troopers listened and wondered, for they could not understand what save earth and stone could lie below the watch-towers.

Shahbaz Khan began to call again: 'They are below us. I can see them. For the pity of God come over to me, Hafiz Ullah! My father slew ten of them. Come over!'

Hafiz Ullah answered in a very loud voice, 'Mine was guiltless. Hear, ye Men of the Night, neither my father nor my blood had any part in that sin. Bear thou thy own punishment, Shahbaz Khan.'

'Oh, some one ought to stop those two chaps crowing away like cocks there,' said Lieutenant Halley, shivering under his rock.

He had hardly turned round to expose a new side of him to the rain before a bearded, long-locked, evil-smelling Afghan rushed up the hill, and tumbled into his arms. Halley sat upon him, and thrust as much of a sword-hilt as could be spared down the man's gullet. 'If you cry out, I kill you,' he said cheerfully.

The man was beyond any expression of terror. He lay and quaked, grunting. When Halley took the sword-hilt from between his teeth, he was still inarticulate, but clung to Halley's arm, feeling it from elbow to wrist.

'The Rissala! The dead Rissala!' he gasped. 'It is down there!'

'No; the Rissala, the very much alive Rissala. It is up here,' said Halley, unshipping his watering-bridle, and fastening the man's hands. 'Why were you in the towers so foolish as to let us pass?'

'The valley is full of the dead,' said the Afghan. 'It is better to fall into the hands of the English than the hands of the dead. They march to and fro below there. I saw them in the lightning.'

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He recovered his composure after a little, and whispering, because Halley's pistol was at his stomach, said: 'What is this? There is no war between us now, and the Mullah will kill me for not seeing you pass!'

'Rest easy,' said Halley; 'we are coming to kill the Mullah, if God please. His teeth have grown too long. No harm will come to thee unless the daylight shows thee as a face which is desired by the gallows for crime done. But what of the dead regiment?'

'I only kill within my own border,' said the man, immensely relieved. 'The Dead Regiment is below. The men must have passed through it on their journey—four hundred dead on horses, stumbling among their own graves, among the little heaps—dead men all, whom we slew.'

'Whew!' said Halley. 'That accounts for my cursing Carter and the Major cursing me. Four hundred sabres, eh? No wonder we thought there were a few extra men in the troop. Kurruk Shah,' he whispered to a grizzled native officer that lay within a few feet of him, 'hast thou heard anything of a dead Rissala in these hills?'

'Assuredly,' said Kurruk Shah with a grim chuckle. 'Otherwise, why did I, who have served the Queen for seven-and-twenty years, and killed many hill-dogs, shout aloud for quarter when the lightning revealed us to the watch-towers? When I was a young man I saw the killing in the valley of Sheor-Kot there at our feet, and I know the tale that grew up therefrom. But how can the ghosts of unbelievers prevail against us who are of the Faith? Strap that dog's hands a little tighter, Sahib. An Afghan is like an eel.'

'But a dead Rissala,' said Halley, jerking his captive's

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wrist. 'That is foolish talk, Kurruk Shah. The dead are dead. Hold still, dog.' The Afghan wriggled.

'The dead are dead, and for that reason they walk at night. What need to talk? We be men; we have our eyes and ears. Thou canst both see and hear them, down the hillside,' said Kurruk Shah composedly.

Halley stared and listened long and intently. The valley was full of stifled noises, as every valley must be at night; but whether he saw or heard more than was natural Halley alone knows, and he does not choose to speak on the subject.

At last, and just before the dawn, a green rocket shot up from the far side of the valley of Bersund, at the head of the gorge, to show that the Goorkhas were in position. A red light from the infantry at left and right answered it, and the cavalry burnt a white flare. Afghans in winter are late sleepers, and it was not till full day that the Gulla Kutta Mullah's men began to straggle from their huts, rubbing their eyes. They saw men in green, and red, and brown uniforms, leaning on their arms, neatly arranged all round the crater of the village of Bersund, in a cordon that not even a wolf could have broken. They rubbed their eyes the more when a pink-faced young man, who was not even in the Army, but represented the Political Department, tripped down the hillside with two orderlies, rapped at the door of the Gulla Kutta Mullah's house, and told him quietly to step out and be tied up for safe transport. That same young man passed on through the huts, tapping here one cateran and there another lightly with his cane; and as each was pointed out, so he was tied up, staring hopelessly at the crowned heights around where the English soldiers looked down with incurious eyes. Only the

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Mullah tried to carry it off with curses and high words, till a soldier who was tying his hands said:—

‘None o’ your lip! Why didn’t you come out when you was ordered, instead o’ keepin’ us awake all night? You’re no better than my own barrack-sweeper, you white-’eaded old polyanthus! Kim up!’

Half an hour later the troops had gone away with the Mullah and his thirteen friends. The dazed villagers were looking ruefully at a pile of broken muskets and snapped swords, and wondering how in the world they had come so to miscalculate the forbearance of the Indian Government.

It was a very neat little affair, neatly carried out, and the men concerned were unofficially thanked for their services.

Yet it seems to me that much credit is also due to another regiment whose name did not appear in the brigade orders, and whose very existence is in danger of being forgotten.

IN THE RUKH

(1892)

The Only Son lay down again and dreamed that he
dreamed a dream.

The last ash dropped from the dying fire with the click
of a falling spark,

And the Only Son woke up again and called across the
dark:—

‘Now, was I born of womankind and laid in a mother’s
breast?

For I have dreamed of a shaggy hide whereon I went to
rest.

And was I born of womankind and laid on a father’s arm?
For I have dreamed of long white teeth that guarded me
from harm.

Oh, was I born of womankind and did I play alone?
For I have dreamed of playmates twain that bit me to
the bone.

And did I break the barley bread and steep it in the tyre?
For I have dreamed of a youngling kid new riven from
the byre.

An hour it lacks and an hour it lacks to the rising of the
moon—

But I can see the black roof-beams as plain as it were
noon!

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'Tis a league and a league to the Lena Falls where the
trooping sambhur go,
But I can hear the little fawn that bleats behind the doe!
'Tis a league and a league to the Lena Falls where the
crop and the upland meet,
But I can smell the warm wet wind that whispers through
the wheat!'

'The Only Son.'

OF the wheels of public service that turn under the Indian Government, there is none more important than the Department of Woods and Forests. The reboisement of all India is in its hands; or will be when Government has the money to spend. Its servants wrestle with wandering sand-torrents and shifting dunes: wattling them at the sides, damming them in front, and pegging them down atop with coarse grass and spindling pine after the rules of Nancy. They are responsible for all the timber in the State forests of the Himalayas, as well as for the denuded hillsides that the monsoons wash into dry gullies and aching ravines; each cut a mouth crying aloud what carelessness can do. They experiment with battalions of foreign trees, and coax the blue gum to take root, and, perhaps, dry up the Canal fever. In the plains the chief part of their duty is to see that the belt fire-lines in the forest reserves are kept clean, so that when drought comes and the cattle starve, they may throw the reserve open to the villager's herds and allow the man himself to gather sticks. They poll and lop for the stacked railway-fuel along the lines that burn no coal; they calculate the profit of their plantations to five points of decimals; they are the doctors and midwives of the huge teak forests of Upper Burma,

IN THE RUKH

the rubber of the Eastern Jungles, and the gall-nuts of the South; and they are always hampered by lack of funds. But since a Forest Officer's business takes him far from the beaten roads and the regular stations, he learns to grow wise in more than wood-lore alone; to know the people and the polity of the jungle; meeting tiger, bear, leopard, wild-dog, and all the deer, not once or twice after days of beating, but again and again in the execution of his duty. He spends much time in saddle or under canvas—the friend of newly-planted trees, the associate of uncouth rangers and hairy trackers—till the woods, that show his care, in turn set their mark upon him, and he ceases to sing the naughty French songs he learned at Nancy, and grows silent with the silent things of the underbrush.

Gisborne of the Woods and Forests had spent four years in the service. At first he loved it without comprehension, because it led him into the open on horseback and gave him authority. Then he hated it furiously, and would have given a year's pay for one month of such society as India affords. That crisis over, the forests took him back again, and he was content to serve them, to deepen and widen his fire-lines, to watch the green mist of his new plantation against the older foliage, to dredge out the choked stream, and to follow and strengthen the last struggle of the forest where it broke down and died among the long pig-grass. On some still day that grass would be burned off, and a hundred beasts that had their homes there would rush out before the pale flames at high noon. Later, the forest would creep forward over the blackened ground in orderly lines of saplings, and Gisborne, watching, would be well pleased. His bungalow, a thatched white-walled cottage of two

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rooms, was set at one end of the great rukh and overlooking it. He made no pretence at keeping a garden, for the rukh swept up to his door, curled over in a thicket of bamboo, and he rode from his veranda into its heart without the need of any carriage-drive.

Abdul Gafur, his fat Mohammedan butler, fed him when he was at home, and spent the rest of the time gossiping with the little band of native servants whose huts lay behind the bungalow. There were two grooms, a cook, a water-carrier, and a sweeper, and that was all. Gisborne cleaned his own guns and kept no dog. Dogs scared the game, and it pleased the man to be able to say where the subjects of his kingdom would drink at moon-rise, eat before dawn, and lie up in the day's heat. The rangers and forest-guards lived in little huts far away in the rukh, only appearing when one of them had been injured by a falling tree or a wild beast. Thus Gisborne was alone.

In spring the rukh put out few new leaves, but lay dry and still untouched by the finger of the year, waiting for rain. Only there was then more calling and roaring in the dark on a quiet night; the tumult of a battle-royal among the tigers, the bellowing of arrogant buck, or the steady wood-chopping of an old boar sharpening his tushes against a bole. Then Gisborne laid aside his little-used gun altogether, for it was to him a sin to kill. In summer, through the furious May heats, the rukh reeled in the haze, and Gisborne watched for the first sign of curling smoke that should betray a forest fire. Then came the Rains with a roar, and the rukh was blotted out in fetch after fetch of warm mist, and the broad leaves drummed the night through under the big drops; and there was a noise of running water, and of juicy

green stuff crackling where the wind struck it, and the lightning wove patterns behind the dense matting of the foliage, till the sun broke loose again and the rukh stood with hot flanks smoking to the newly-washed sky. Then the heat and the dry cold subdued everything to tiger-colour again. So Gisborne learned to know his rukh and was very happy. His pay came month by month, but he had very little need for money. The currency notes accumulated in the drawer where he kept his home-letters and the recapping-machine. If he drew anything, it was to make a purchase from the Calcutta Botanical Gardens, or to pay a ranger's widow a sum that the Government of India would never have sanctioned for her man's death.

Payment was good, but vengeance was also necessary, and he took that when he could. One night of many nights a runner, breathless and gasping, came to him with the news that a forest-guard lay dead by the Kanye stream, the side of his head smashed in as though it had been an egg-shell. Gisborne went out at dawn to look for the murderer. It is only travellers, and now and then young soldiers, who are known to the world as great hunters. The Forest Officers take their shikar as part of the day's work, and no one hears of it. Gisborne went on foot to the place of the kill: the widow was wailing over the corpse as it lay on a bedstead, while two or three men were looking at footprints on the moist ground. 'That is the Red One,' said a man. 'I knew he would turn to man in time, but surely there is game enough even for him. This must have been done for devilry.'

'The Red One lies up in the rocks at the back of the sal trees,' said Gisborne. He knew the tiger under suspicion.

'Not now, Sahib, not now. He will be raging and

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ranging to and fro. Remember that the first kill is a triple kill always. Our blood makes them mad. He may be behind us even as we speak.'

'He may have gone to the next hut,' said another. 'It is only four koss. Wallah, who is this?'

Gisborne turned with the others. A man was walking down the dried bed of the stream, naked except for the loin-cloth, but crowned with a wreath of the tasselled blossoms of the white convolvulus creeper. So noiselessly did he move over the little pebbles that even Gisborne, used to the soft-footedness of trackers, started.

'The tiger that killed,' he began, without any salute, 'has gone to drink, and now he is asleep under a rock beyond that hill.' His voice was clear and bell-like, utterly different from the usual whine of the native, and his face as he lifted it in the sunshine might have been that of an angel strayed among the woods. The widow ceased wailing above the corpse and looked round-eyed at the stranger, returning to her duty with double strength.

'Shall I show the Sahib?' he said simply.

'If thou art sure—' Gisborne began.

'Sure indeed. I saw him only an hour ago—the dog. It is before his time to eat man's flesh. He has yet a dozen sound teeth in his evil head.'

The men kneeling above the footprints slunk off quietly, for fear that Gisborne should ask them to go with him, and the young man laughed a little to himself.

'Come, Sahib,' he cried, and turned on his heel, walking before his companion.

'Not so fast. I cannot keep that pace,' said the white man. 'Halt there. Thy face is new to me.'

'That may be. I am but newly come into this forest.'

IN THE RUKH

‘From what village?’

‘I am without a village. I came from over there.’
He flung out his arm towards the north.

‘A gipsy then?’

‘No, Sahib. I am a man without caste, and for matter of that without a father.’

‘What do men call thee?’

‘Mowgli, Sahib. And what is the Sahib’s name?’

‘I am the warden of this rukh—Gisborne is my name.’

‘How? Do they number the trees and the blades of grass here?’

‘Even so; lest such gipsy fellows as thou set them afire.’

‘I! I would not hurt the jungle for any gift. That is my home.’

He turned to Gisborne with a smile that was irresistible, and held up a warning hand.

‘Now, Sahib, we must go a little quietly. There is no need to wake the dog, though he sleeps heavily enough. Perhaps it were better if I went forward alone and drove him down wind to the Sahib.’

‘Allah! Since when have tigers been driven to and fro like cattle by naked men?’ said Gisborne, aghast at the man’s audacity.

He laughed again softly. ‘Nay, then, come along with me and shoot him in thy own way with the big English rifle.’

Gisborne stepped in his guide’s track, twisted, crawled, and clomb and stooped and suffered through all the many agonies of a jungle-stalk. He was purple and dripping with sweat when Mowgli at the last bade him raise his head and peer over a blue baked rock near a tiny hill pool. By the waterside lay the tiger extended and at ease, lazily licking clean again an enormous elbow

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and fore-paw. He was old, yellow-toothed, and not a little mangy, but in that setting and sunshine, imposing enough.

Gisborne had no false ideas of sport where the man-eater was concerned. This thing was vermin, to be killed as speedily as possible. He waited to recover his breath, rested the rifle on the rock and whistled. The brute's head turned slowly not twenty feet from the rifle-mouth, and Gisborne planted his shots, business-like, one behind the shoulder and the other a little below the eye. At that range the heavy bones were no guard against the rending bullets.

'Well, the skin was not worth keeping at any rate,' said he, as the smoke cleared away and the beast lay kicking and gasping in the last agony.

'A dog's death for a dog,' said Mowgli quietly. 'Indeed there is nothing in that carrion worth taking away.'

'The whiskers. Dost thou not take the whiskers?' said Gisborne, who knew how the rangers valued such things.

'I? Am I a lousy shikarri of the jungle to paddle with a tiger's muzzle? Let him lie. Here come his friends already.'

A dropping kite whistled shrilly overhead, as Gisborne snapped out the empty shells, and wiped his face.

'And if thou art not a shikarri, where didst thou learn thy knowledge of the tiger-folk?' said he. 'No tracker could have done better.'

'I hate all tigers,' said Mowgli curtly. 'Let the Sahib give me his gun to carry. Arre, it is a very fine one! And where does the Sahib go now?'

'To my house.'

'May I come? I have never yet looked withinsides a white man's house.'

Gisborne returned to his bungalow, Mowgli striding noiselessly before him, his brown skin glistening in the sunlight.

He stared curiously at the veranda and the two chairs there, fingered the split bamboo shade curtains with suspicion, and entered, looking always behind him. Gisborne loosed a curtain to keep out the sun. It dropped with a clatter, but almost before it touched the flagging of the veranda Mowgli had leaped clear, and was standing with heaving chest in the open.

‘It is a trap,’ he said quickly.

Gisborne laughed. ‘White men do not trap men. Indeed thou art altogether of the jungle.’

‘I see,’ said Mowgli, ‘it has neither catch nor fall. I—I never beheld these things till to-day.’

He came in on tiptoe and stared with large eyes at the furniture of the two rooms. Abdul Gafur, who was laying lunch, looked at him with deep disgust.

‘So much trouble to eat, and so much trouble to lie down after you have eaten!’ said Mowgli with a grin. ‘We do better in the jungle. It is very wonderful. There are very many rich things here. Is the Sahib not afraid that he may be robbed? I have never seen such wonderful things.’ He was staring at a dusty Benares brass plate on a rickety bracket.

‘Only a thief from the jungle would rob here,’ said Abdul Gafur, setting down a plate with a clatter. Mowgli opened his eyes wide and stared at the white-bearded Mohammedan.

‘In my country when goats bleat very loud we cut their throats,’ he returned cheerfully. ‘But have no fear, thou. I am going.’

He turned and disappeared into the rukh. Gisborne

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looked after him with a laugh that ended in a little sigh. There was not much outside his regular work to interest the Forest Officer, and this son of the forest, who seemed to know tigers as other people know dogs, would have been a diversion.

‘He’s a most wonderful chap,’ thought Gisborne; ‘he’s like the illustrations in the Classical Dictionary. I wish I could have made him a gun-boy. There’s no fun in shikarring alone, and this fellow would have been a perfect shikarri. I wonder what in the world he is.’

That evening he sat on the veranda under the stars smoking as he wondered. A puff of smoke curled from the pipe-bowl. As it cleared he was aware of Mowgli sitting with arms crossed on the veranda edge. A ghost could not have drifted up more noiselessly. Gisborne started and let the pipe drop.

‘There is no man to talk to out there in the rukh,’ said Mowgli. ‘I came here, therefore.’ He picked up the pipe and returned it to Gisborne.

‘Oh,’ said Gisborne, and after a long pause, ‘What news is there in the rukh? Hast thou found another tiger?’

‘The nilghai are changing their feeding-ground against the new moon, as is their custom. The pig are feeding near the Kanye river now, because they will not feed with the nilghai, and one of their sows has been killed by a leopard in the long grass at the water-head. I do not know any more.’

‘And how didst thou know all these things?’ said Gisborne, leaning forward and looking at the eyes that glittered in the starlight.

‘How should I not know? The nilghai has his custom and his use, and a child knows that pig will not feed with him.’

IN THE RUKH

‘I do not know this,’ said Gisborne.

‘Tck! Tck! And thou art in charge—so the men of the huts tell me—in charge of all this rukh?’ He laughed to himself.

‘It is well enough to talk and to tell child’s tales,’ Gisborne retorted, nettled at the chuckle. ‘To say that this and that goes on in the rukh. No man can deny thee.’

‘As for the sow’s carcase, I will show thee her bones to-morrow,’ Mowgli returned, absolutely unmoved. ‘Touching the matter of the nilghai, if the Sahib will sit here very still I will drive one nilghai up to this place, and by listening to the sounds carefully, the Sahib can tell whence that nilghai has been driven.’

‘Mowgli, the jungle has made thee mad,’ said Gisborne. ‘Who can drive nilghai?’

‘Still—sit still, then. I go.’

‘Gad, the man’s a ghost!’ said Gisborne; for Mowgli had faded out into the darkness and there was no sound of feet. The rukh lay out in great velvety folds in the uncertain shimmer of the star-dust—so still that the least little wandering wind among the tree-tops came up as the sigh of a child sleeping equably. Abdul Gafur in the cook-house was clicking plates together.

‘Be still there!’ shouted Gisborne, and composed himself to listen as a man can who is used to the stillness of the rukh. It had been his custom, to preserve his self-respect in his isolation, to dress for dinner each night, and the stiff white shirt-front creaked with his regular breathing till he shifted a little sideways. Then the tobacco of a somewhat foul pipe began to purr, and he threw the pipe from him. Now, except for the night-breath in the rukh, everything was dumb.

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From an inconceivable distance, and drawled through immeasurable darkness, came the faint, faint echo of a wolf's howl. Then silence again for, it seemed, long hours. At last, when his legs below the knees had lost all feeling, Gisborne heard something that might have been a crash far off through the undergrowth. He doubted till it was repeated again and yet again.

'That's from the west,' he muttered; 'there's something on foot there.' The noise increased—crash on crash, plunge on plunge—with the thick grunting of a hotly pressed nilghai, flying in panic terror and taking no heed to his course.

A shadow blundered out from between the tree-trunks, wheeled back, turned again grunting, and with a clatter on the bare ground dashed up almost within reach of his hand. It was a bull nilghai, dripping with dew—his withers hung with a torn trail of creeper, his eyes shining in the light from the house. The creature checked at sight of the man, and fled along the edge of the rukh till he melted in the darkness. The first idea in Gisborne's bewildered mind was the indecency of thus dragging out for inspection the big blue bull of the rukh—the putting him through his paces in the night which should have been his own.

Then said a smooth voice at his ear as he stood staring:

'He came from the water-head where he was leading the herd. From the west he came. Does the Sahib believe now, or shall I bring up the herd to be counted? The Sahib is in charge of this rukh.'

Mowgli had reseated himself on the veranda, breathing a little quickly. Gisborne looked at him with open mouth. 'How was that accomplished?' he said.

'The Sahib saw. The bull was driven—driven as a

buffalo is. Ho! ho! He will have a fine tale to tell when he returns to the herd.'

'That is a new trick to me. Canst thou run as swiftly as the nilghai, then?'

'The Sahib has seen. If the Sahib needs more knowledge at any time of the movings of the game, I, Mowgli, am here. This is a good rukh, and I shall stay.'

'Stay then, and if thou hast need of a meal at any time my servants shall give thee one.'

'Yes, indeed, I am fond of cooked food,' Mowgli answered quickly. 'No man may say that I do not eat boiled and roast as much as any other man. I will come for that meal.' Now, on my part, I promise that the Sahib shall sleep safely in his house by night, and no thief shall break in to carry away his so rich treasures.'

The conversation ended itself on Mowgli's abrupt departure. Gisborne sat long smoking, and the upshot of his thoughts was that in Mowgli he had found at last that ideal ranger and forest-guard for whom he and the Department were always looking.

'I must get him into the Government service somehow. A man who can drive nilghai would know more about the rukh than fifty men. He's a miracle—a *lusus naturæ*—but a forest-guard he must be if he'll only settle down in one place,' said Gisborne.

Abdul Gafur's opinion was less favourable. He confided to Gisborne at bedtime that strangers from God-knew-where were more than likely to be professional thieves, and that he personally did not approve of naked outcastes who had not the proper manner of addressing white people. Gisborne laughed and bade him go to his quarters, and Abdul Gafur retreated growling. Later in the night he found occasion to rise up and beat his thir-

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teen-year-old daughter. Nobody knew the cause of dispute, but Gisborne heard the cry.

Through the days that followed Mowgli came and went like a shadow. He had established himself and his wild housekeeping close to the bungalow, but on the edge of the rukh, where Gisborne, going out on to the veranda for a breath of cool air, would see him sometimes sitting in the moonlight, his forehead on his knees, or lying out along the fling of a branch, closely pressed to it as some beast of the night. Thence Mowgli would throw him a salutation and bid him sleep at ease, or descending would weave prodigious stories of the manners of the beasts in the rukh. Once he wandered into the stables and was found looking at the horses with deep interest.

‘That,’ said Abdul Gafur pointedly, ‘is sure sign that some day he will steal one. Why, if he lives about this house, does he not take an honest employment? But no, he must wander up and down like a loose camel, turning the heads of fools and opening the jaws of the unwise to folly.’ So Abdul Gafur would give harsh orders to Mowgli when they met, would bid him fetch water and pluck fowls, and Mowgli, laughing unconcernedly, would obey.

‘He has no caste,’ said Abdul Gafur. ‘He will do anything. Look to it, Sahib, that he does not do too much. A snake is a snake, and a jungle-gipsy is a thief till the death.’

‘Be silent, then,’ said Gisborne. ‘I allow thee to correct thy own household if there is not too much noise, because I know thy customs and use. My custom thou dost not know. The man is without doubt a little mad.’

‘Very little mad indeed,’ said Abdul Gafur. ‘But we shall see what comes thereof.’

A few days later on his business took Gisborne into the rukh for three days. Abdul Gafur being old and fat was left at home. He did not approve of lying up in rangers' huts, and was inclined to levy contributions in his master's name of grain and oil and milk from those who could ill afford such benevolences. Gisborne rode off early one dawn a little vexed that his man of the woods was not at the veranda to accompany him. He liked him—liked his strength, fleetness, and silence of foot, and his ever-ready open smile; his ignorance of all forms of ceremony and salutations, and the childlike tales that he would tell (and Gisborne would credit now) of what the game was doing in the rukh. After an hour's riding through the greenery, he heard a rustle behind him, and Mowgli trotted at his stirrup.

'We have a three days' work toward,' said Gisborne, 'among the new trees.'

'Good,' said Mowgli. 'It is always good to cherish young trees. They make cover if the beasts leave them alone. We must shift the pig again.'

'Again? How?' Gisborne smiled.

'Oh, they were rooting and tusking among the young sal last night, and I drove them off. Therefore I did not come to the veranda this morning. The pig should not be on this side of the rukh at all. We must keep them below the head of the Kanye river.'

'If a man could herd clouds he might do that thing; but, Mowgli, if, as thou sayest, thou art herder in the rukh for no gain and for no pay—'

'It is the Sahib's rukh,' said Mowgli, quickly looking up. Gisborne nodded thanks and went on: 'Would it not be better to work for pay from the Government? There is a pension at the end of long service.'

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‘Of that I have thought,’ said Mowgli, ‘but the rangers live in huts with shut doors, and all that is all too much a trap to me. Yet I think—’

‘Think well then and tell me later. Here we will stay for breakfast.’

Gisborne dismounted, took his morning meal from his home-made saddle-bags, and saw the day open hot above the rukh. Mowgli lay in the grass at his side staring up to the sky.

Presently he said in a lazy whisper: ‘Sahib, is there any order at the bungalow to take out the white mare to-day?’

‘No, she is fat and old and a little lame beside. Why?’

‘She is being ridden now and not slowly on the road that runs to the railway line.’

‘Bah, that is two koss away. It is a woodpecker.’

Mowgli put up his forearm to keep the sun out of his eyes.

‘The road curves in with a big curve from the bungalow. It is not more than a koss, at the farthest, as the kite goes; and sound flies with the birds. Shall we see?’

‘What folly! To run a koss in this sun to see a noise in the forest.’

‘Nay, the pony is the Sahib’s pony. I meant only to bring her here. If she is not the Sahib’s pony, no matter. If she is, the Sahib can do what he wills. She is certainly being ridden hard.’

‘And how wilt thou bring her here, madman?’

‘Has the Sahib forgotten? By the road of the nilghai and no other.’

‘Up then and run if thou art so full of zeal.’

‘Oh, I do not run!’ He put out his hand to sign for

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silence, and still lying on his back called aloud thrice—with a deep gurgling cry that was new to Gisborne.

‘She will come,’ he said at the end. ‘Let us wait in the shade.’ The long eyelashes drooped over the wild eyes as Mowgli began to doze in the morning hush. Gisborne waited patiently: Mowgli was surely mad, but as entertaining a companion as a lonely Forest Officer could desire.

‘Ho! ho!’ said Mowgli lazily, with shut eyes. ‘He has dropped off. Well, first the mare will come and then the man.’ Then he yawned as Gisborne’s pony stallion neighed. Three minutes later Gisborne’s white mare, saddled, bridled, but riderless, tore into the glade where they were sitting, and hurried to her companion.

‘She is not very warm,’ said Mowgli, ‘but in this heat the sweat comes easily. Presently we shall see her rider, for a man goes more slowly than a horse—especially if he chance to be a fat man and old.’

‘Allah! This is the devil’s work,’ cried Gisborne, leaping to his feet, for he heard a yell in the jungle.

‘Have no care, Sahib. He will not be hurt. He also will say that it is devil’s work. Ah! Listen! Who is that?’

It was the voice of Abdul Gafur in an agony of terror, crying out upon unknown things to spare him and his gray hairs.

‘Nay, I cannot move another step,’ he howled. ‘I am old and my turban is lost. Arre! Arre! But I will move. Indeed I will hasten. I will run! Oh, Devils of the Pit, I am a Mussulman!’

The undergrowth parted and gave up Abdul Gafur, turbanless, shoeless, with his waist-cloth unbound, mud and grass in his clutched hands, and his face purple. He

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saw Gisborne, yelled anew, and pitched forward, exhausted and quivering, at his feet. Mowgli watched him with a sweet smile.

‘This is no joke,’ said Gisborne sternly. ‘The man is like to die, Mowgli.’

‘He will not die. He is only afraid. There was no need that he should have come out of a walk.’

Abdul Gafur groaned and rose up, shaking in every limb.

‘It was witchcraft—witchcraft and devildom!’ he sobbed, fumbling with his hand in his breast. ‘Because of my sin I have been whipped through the woods by devils. It is all finished. I repent. Take them, Sahib!’ He held out a roll of dirty paper.

‘What is the meaning of this, Abdul Gafur?’ said Gisborne, already knowing what would come.

‘Put me in the jail-khana—the notes are all here—but lock me up safely that no devils may follow. I have sinned against the Sahib and his salt which I have eaten; and but for those accursed wood-demons, I might have bought land afar off and lived in peace all my days.’ He beat his head upon the ground in an agony of despair and mortification. Gisborne turned the roll of notes over and over. It was his accumulated back-pay for the last nine months—the roll that lay in the drawer with the home-letters and the recapping-machine. Mowgli watched Abdul Gafur, laughing noiselessly to himself. ‘There is no need to put me on the horse again. I will walk home slowly with the Sahib, and then he can send me under guard to the jail-khana. The Government gives many years for this offence,’ said the butler sullenly.

Loneliness in the rukh affects very many ideas about

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very many things. Gisborne stared at Abdul Gafur, remembering that he was a very good servant, and that a new butler must be broken into the ways of the house from the beginning, and at the best would be a new face and a new tongue.

‘Listen, Abdul Gafur,’ he said. ‘Thou hast done great wrong, and altogether lost thy izzat and thy reputation. But I think that this came upon thee suddenly.’

‘Allah! I had never desired the notes before. The Evil took me by the throat while I looked.’

‘That also I can believe. Go then back to my house, and when I return I will send the notes by a runner to the Bank, and there shall be no more said. Thou art too old for the jail-khana. Also thy household is guiltless.’

For answer Abdul Gafur sobbed between Gisborne’s cowhide riding-boots.

‘Is there no dismissal then?’ he gulped.

‘That we shall see. It hangs upon thy conduct when we return. Get upon the mare and ride slowly back.’

‘But the devils! The rukh is full of devils.’

‘No matter, my father. They will do thee no more harm unless, indeed, the Sahib’s orders be not obeyed,’ said Mowgli. ‘Then, perchance, they may drive thee home—by the road of the nilghai.’

Abdul Gafur’s lower jaw dropped as he twisted up his waist-cloth, staring at Mowgli.

‘Are they his devils? His devils! And I had thought to return and lay the blame upon this warlock!’

‘That was well thought of, Huzrut; but before we make a trap we see first how big the game is that may fall into it. Now I thought no more than that a man had taken one of the Sahib’s horses. I did not know that the design was to make me a thief before the Sahib,

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or my devils had haled thee here by the leg. It is not too late now.'

Mowgli looked inquiringly at Gisborne; but Abdul Gafur waddled hastily to the white mare, scrambled on her back and fled, the woodways crashing and echoing behind him.

'That was well done; said Mowgli. But he will fall again unless he holds by the mane.'

'Now it is time to tell me what these things mean,' said Gisborne a little sternly. 'What is this talk of thy devils? How can men be driven up and down the rukh like cattle? Give answer.'

'Is the Sahib angry because I have saved him his money?'

'No, but there is trick-work in this that does not please me.'

'Very good. Now if I rose and stepped three paces into the rukh there is no one, not even the Sahib, could find me till I choose. As I would not willingly do this, so I would not willingly tell. Have patience a little, Sahib, and some day I will show thee everything, for, if thou wilt, some day we will drive the buck together. There is no devil-work in the matter at all. Only . . . I know the rukh as a man knows the cooking-place in his house.'

Mowgli was speaking as he would speak to an impatient child. Gisborne, puzzled, baffled, and a great deal annoyed, said nothing, but stared on the ground and thought. When he looked up the man of the woods had gone.

'It is not good,' said a level voice from the thicket, 'for friends to be angry. Wait till the evening, Sahib, when the air cools.'

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Left to himself thus, dropped as it were in the heart of the rukh, Gisborne swore, then laughed, remounted his pony, and rode on. He visited a ranger's hut, overlooked a couple of new plantations, left some orders as to the burning of a patch of dry grass, and set out for a camping-ground of his own choice, a pile of splintered rocks roughly roofed over with branches and leaves, not far from the banks of the Kanye stream. It was twilight when he came in sight of his resting-place, and the rukh was waking to the hushed ravenous life of the night.

A camp-fire flickered on the knoll, and there was the smell of a very good dinner in the wind.

'Um,' said Gisborne, 'that's better than cold meat at any rate. Now the only man who'd be likely to be here'd be Muller, and, officially, he ought to be looking over the Changamanga rukh. I suppose that's why he's on my ground.'

The gigantic German who was the head of the Woods and Forests of all India, Head Ranger from Burma to Bombay, had a habit of flitting bat-like without warning from one place to another, and turning up exactly where he was least looked for. His theory was that sudden visitations, the discovery of shortcomings and a word-of-mouth upbraiding of a subordinate were infinitely better than the slow processes of correspondence, which might end in a written and official reprimand—a thing in after years to be counted against a Forest Officer's record. As he explained it: 'If I only talk to my boys like a Dutch uncle, dey say, "It was only dot damned old Muller," and dey do better next dime. But if my fat-head clerk he write and say dot Muller der Inspecdor-General fail to onderstand and is much annoyed, first dot does no goot because I am not dere,

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and, second, der fool dot comes after me he may say to my best boys: "Look here, you haf been wigged by my bredecessor." I tell you der big brass-hat pizness does not make der trees grow.'

Muller's deep voice was coming out of the darkness behind the firelight as he bent over the shoulders of his pet cook. 'Not so much sauce, you son of Belial! Worcester sauce he is a gondiment and not a fluid. Ah, Gisborne, you haf come to a very bad dinner. Where is your camp?' and he walked up to shake hands.

'I'm the camp, sir,' said Gisborne. 'I didn't know you were about here.'

Muller looked at the young man's trim figure. 'Goot! That is very goot! One horse and some cold things to eat. When I was young I did my camp so. Now you shall dine with me. I went into Headquarters to make up my rebort last month. I haf written half—ho! ho!—and der rest I haf leaved to my glerks and come out for a walk. Der Government is mad about dose reborts. I dold der Viceroy so at Simla.'

Gisborne chuckled, remembering the many tales that were told of Muller's conflicts with the Supreme Government. He was the chartered libertine of all the offices, for as a Forest Officer he had no equal.

'If I find you, Gisborne, sitting in your bungalow und hatching reborts to me about der blantations instead of riding der blantations, I will dransfer you to der middle of der Bikaner Desert to reforest him. I am sick of reborts und chewing paper when we should do our work.'

'There's not much danger of my wasting time over my annuals. I hate them as much as you do, sir.'

The talk went over at this point to professional matters. Muller had some questions to ask, and Gisborne

orders and hints to receive, till dinner was ready. It was the most civilised meal Gisborne had eaten for months. No distance from the base of supplies was allowed to interfere with the work of Muller's cook; and that table spread in the wilderness began with devilled small fresh-water fish, and ended with coffee and cognac.

'Ah!' said Muller at the end, with a sigh of satisfaction as he lighted a cheroot and dropped into his much-worn camp-chair. 'When I am making reborts I am Freethinker und Atheist, but here in der rukh I am more than Christian. I am Bagan also.' He rolled the cheroot-butt luxuriously under his tongue, dropped his hands on his knees, and stared before him into the dim shifting heart of the rukh, full of stealthy noises: the snapping of twigs like the snapping of the fire behind him; the sigh and rustle of a heat-bended branch recovering her straightness in the cool night; the incessant mutter of the Kanye stream, and the undernote of the many-peopled grass uplands out of sight beyond a swell of hill. He blew out a thick puff of smoke, and began to quote Heine to himself.

'Yes, it is very goot. Very goot. "Yes, I work miracles, and, by Gott, dey come off too." I remember when dere was no rukh more big than your knee, from here to der plough-lands, und in drought-time der cattle ate bones of dead cattle up and down. Now der trees haf come back. Dey were planted by a Freethinker, because he know just de cause dot made der effect. But der trees dey had der cult of der old gods—"und der Christian Gods howl loudly." Dey could not live in der rukh, Gisborne.'

A shadow moved in one of the bridle-paths—moved and stepped out into the starlight.

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‘I haf said true. Hush! Here is Faunus himself come to see der Insbector-General. Himmel, he is der god! Look!’

It was Mowgli, crowned with his wreath of white flowers and walking with a half-peeled branch—Mowgli, very mistrustful of the firelight and ready to fly back to the thicket on the least alarm.

‘That’s a friend of mine,’ said Gisborne. ‘He’s looking for me. Ohe, Mowgli!’

Muller had barely time to gasp before the man was at Gisborne’s side, crying: ‘I was wrong to go. I was wrong, but I did not know then that the mate of him that was killed by this river was awake looking for thee. Else I should not have gone away. She tracked thee from the back-range, Sahib.’

‘He is a little mad,’ said Gisborne, ‘and he speaks of all the beasts about here as if he was a friend of theirs.’

‘Of course—of course. If Faunus does not know, who should know?’ said Muller gravely. ‘What does he say about tigers—dis god who knows you so well?’

Gisborne relighted his cheroot, and before he had finished the story of Mowgli and his exploits it was burned down to moustache-edge. Muller listened without interruption. ‘Dot is not madness,’ he said at last when Gisborne had described the driving of Abdul Gafur. ‘Dot is not madness at all.’

‘What is it, then? He left me in a temper this morning because I asked him to tell how he did it. I fancy the chap’s possessed in some way.’

‘No, dere is no bossession, but it is most wonderful. Normally they die young—dese beople. Und you say now dot your thief-servant did not say what drove der poney, and of course der nilghai he could not speak.’

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‘No, but, confound it, there wasn’t anything. I listened, and I can hear most things. The bull and the man simply came headlong—mad with fright.’

For answer Muller looked Mowgli up and down from head to foot, then beckoned him nearer. He came as a buck treads a tainted trail.

‘There is no harm,’ said Muller in the vernacular. ‘Hold out an arm.’

He ran his hand down to the elbow, felt that, and nodded. ‘So I thought. Now the knee.’ Gisborne saw him feel the knee-cap and smile. Two or three white scars just above the ankle caught his eye.

‘Those came when thou wast very young?’ he said.

‘Ay,’ Mowgli answered with a smile. ‘They were love-tokens from the little ones.’ Then to Gisborne over his shoulder. ‘This Sahib knows everything. Who is he?’

‘That comes after, my friend. Now where are they?’ said Muller.

Mowgli swept his hand round his head in a circle.

‘So! And thou canst drive nilghai? See! There is my mare in her pickets. Canst thou bring her to me without frightening her?’

‘Can I bring the mare to the Sahib without frightening her!’ Mowgli repeated, raising his voice a little above its normal pitch. ‘What is more easy if the heel-ropes are loose?’

‘Loosen the head and heel pegs,’ shouted Muller to the groom. They were hardly out of the ground before the mare, a huge black Australian, flung up her head and cocked her ears.

‘Careful! I do not wish her driven into the rukh,’ said Muller.

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Mowgli stood still fronting the blaze of the fire—in the very form and likeness of that Greek god who is so lavishly described in the novels. The mare whickered, drew up one hind leg, found that the heel-ropes were free, and moved swiftly to her master, on whose bosom she dropped her head, sweating lightly.

‘She came of her own accord. My horses will do that,’ cried Gisborne.

‘Feel if she sweats,’ said Mowgli.

Gisborne laid a hand on the damp flank.

‘It is enough,’ said Muller.

‘It is enough,’ Mowgli repeated, and a rock behind him threw back the word.

‘That’s uncanny, isn’t it?’ said Gisborne.

‘No, only wonderful—most wonderful. Still you do not know, Gisborne?’

‘I confess I don’t.’

‘Well then, I shall not tell. He says dot some day he will show you what it is. It would be gruel if I told. But why he is not dead I do not understand. Now listen, thou.’ Muller faced Mowgli, and returned to the vernacular. ‘I am the head of all the rukhs in the country of India and others across the Black Water. I do not know how many men be under me—perhaps five thousand, perhaps ten. Thy business is this,—to wander no more up and down the rukh and drive beasts for sport or for show, but to take service under me, who am the Government in the matter of Woods and Forests, and to live in this rukh as a forest-guard; to drive the villagers’ goats away when there is no order to feed them in the rukh; to admit them when there is an order; to keep down, as thou canst keep down, the boar and the nilghai when they become too many; to tell Gisborne Sahib how

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and where tigers move, and what game there is in the forests; and to give sure warning of all the fires in the rukh, for thou canst give warning more quickly than any other. For that work there is a payment each month in silver, and at the end, when thou hast gathered a wife and cattle and, may be, children, a pension. What answer?’

‘That’s just what I—’ Gisborne began.

‘My Sahib spoke this morning of such a service. I walked all day alone considering the matter, and my answer is ready here. I serve, if I serve in this rukh and no other: with Gisborne Sahib and with no other.’

‘It shall be so. In a week comes the written order that pledges the honour of the Government for the pension. After that thou wilt take up thy hut where Gisborne Sahib shall appoint.’

‘I was going to speak to you about it,’ said Gisborne.

‘I did not want to be told when I saw that man. Dere will never be a forest-guard like him. He is a miracle. I tell you, Gisborne, some day you will find it so. Listen, he is blood-brother to every beast in der rukh!’

‘I should be easier in my mind if I could understand him.’

‘Dot will come. Now I tell you dot only once in my service, and dot is thirty years, haf I met a boy dot began as this man began. Und he died. Sometimes you hear of dem in der census reports, but dey all die. Dis man haf lived, and he is an anachronism, for he is before der Iron Age, and der Stone Age. Look here, he is at der beginnings of der history of man—Adam in der Garden, und now we want only an Eva! No! He is older than dot child-tale, shust as der rukh is older dan der gods. Gisborne, I am a Bagan now, once for all.’

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Through the rest of the long evening Muller sat smoking and smoking, and staring and staring into the darkness, his lips moving in multiplied quotations, and great wonder upon his face. He went to his tent, but presently came out again in his majestic pink sleeping-suit, and the last words that Gisborne heard him address to the rukh through the deep hush of midnight were these, delivered with immense emphasis:—

‘Dough we shivt und bedeck und bedrape us,
Dou art noble und nude und andeek;
Libidina dy moder, Briapus
Dy fader, a God und a Greek.

Now I know dot, Bagan or Christian, I shall nefer know der inwardness of der rukh!’

It was midnight in the bungalow a week later when Abdul Gafur, ashy gray with rage, stood at the foot of Gisborne’s bed and whispering bade him awake.

‘Up, Sahib,’ he stammered. ‘Up and bring thy gun. Mine honour is gone. Up and kill before any see.’

The old man’s face had changed, so that Gisborne stared stupidly.

‘It was for this, then, that that jungle outcaste helped me to polish the Sahib’s table, and drew water and plucked fowls. They have gone off together for all my beatings, and now he sits among his devils dragging her soul to the Pit. Up, Sahib, and come with me!’

He thrust a rifle into Gisborne’s half-wakened hand and almost dragged him from the room on to the veranda.

‘They are there in the rukh; even within gunshot of the house. Come softly with me.’

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‘But what is it? What is the trouble, Abdul?’

‘Mowgli, and his devils. Also my own daughter,’ said Abdul Gafur. Gisborne whistled and followed his guide. Not for nothing, he knew, had Abdul Gafur beaten his daughter of nights, and not for nothing had Mowgli helped in the housework a man whom his own powers, whatever those were, had convicted of theft. Also, a forest wooing goes quickly.

There was the breathing of a flute in the rukh, as it might have been the song of some wandering wood-god, and, as they came nearer, a murmur of voices. The path ended in a little semicircular glade walled partly by high grass and partly by trees. In the centre, upon a fallen trunk, his back to the watchers and his arm round the neck of Abdul Gafur’s daughter, sat Mowgli, newly crowned with flowers, playing upon a rude bamboo flute, to whose music four huge wolves danced solemnly on their hind legs.

‘Those are his devils,’ Abdul Gafur whispered. He held a bunch of cartridges in his hand. The beasts dropped to a long-drawn quavering note and lay still with steady green eyes, glaring at the girl.

‘Behold,’ said Mowgli, laying aside the flute. ‘Is there anything of fear in that? I told thee, little Stout-heart, that there was not, and thou didst believe. Thy father said—and oh, if thou couldst have seen thy father being driven by the road of the nilghai!—thy father said that they were devils; and by Allah, who is thy God, I do not wonder that he so believed.’

The girl laughed a little rippling laugh, and Gisborne heard Abdul grind his few remaining teeth. This was not at all the girl that Gisborne had seen with a half-eye slinking about the compound veiled and silent, but an-

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other—a woman full blown in a night as the orchid puts out in an hour's moist heat.

‘But they are my playmates and my brothers, children of that mother that gave me suck, as I told thee behind the cook-house,’ Mowgli went on. ‘Children of the father that lay between me and the cold at the mouth of the cave when I was a little naked child. Look’—a wolf raised his gray jowl, slavering at Mowgli's knee—‘my brother knows that I speak of them. Yes, when I was a little child he was a cub rolling with me on the clay.’

‘But thou hast said that thou art human-born,’ cooed the girl, nestling closer to the shoulder. ‘Thou art human-born?’

‘Said! Nay, I know that I am human-born, because my heart is in thy hold, little one.’ Her head dropped under Mowgli's chin. Gisborne put up a warning hand to restrain Abdul Gafur, who was not in the least impressed by the wonder of the sight.

‘But I was a wolf among wolves none the less till a time came when Those of the jungle bade me go because I was a man.’

‘Who bade thee go? That is not like a true man's talk.’

‘The very beasts themselves. Little one, thou wouldst never believe that telling, but so it was. The beasts of the jungle bade me go, but these four followed me because I was their brother. Then was I a herder of cattle among men, having learned their language. Ho! ho! The herds paid toll to my brothers, till a woman, an old woman, beloved, saw me playing by night with my brethren in the crops. They said that I was possessed of devils, and drove me from that village with sticks and

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stones, and the four came with me by stealth and not openly. That was when I had learned to eat cooked meat and to talk boldly. From village to village I went, heart of my heart, a herder of cattle, a tender of buffaloes, a tracker of game, but there was no man that dared lift a finger against me twice.' He stooped down and patted one of the heads. 'Do thou also like this. There is neither hurt nor magic in them. See, they know thee.'

'The woods are full of all manner of devils,' said the girl with a shudder.

'A lie. A child's lie,' Mowgli returned confidently. 'I have lain out in the dew under the stars and in the dark night, and I know. The jungle is my house. Shall a man fear his own roof-beams or a woman her man's hearth? Stoop down and pat them.'

'They are dogs and unclean,' she murmured, bending forward with averted head.

'Having eaten the fruit, now we remember the Law!' said Abdul Gafur bitterly. 'What is the need of this waiting, Sahib? Kill!'

'H'sh, thou. Let us learn what has happened,' said Gisborne.

'That is well done,' said Mowgli, slipping his arm round the girl again. 'Dogs or no dogs, they were with me through a thousand villages.'

'Ahi, and where was thy heart then? Through a thousand villages. Thou hast seen a thousand maids. I—that am—that am a maid no more, have I thy heart?'

'What shall I swear by? By Allah, of whom thou speakest?'

'Nay, by the life that is in thee, and I am well content. Where was thy heart in those days?'

Mowgli laughed a little. 'In my belly, because I was

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young and always hungry. So I learned to track and to hunt, sending and calling my brothers back and forth as a king calls his armies. Therefore I drove the nilghai for the foolish young Sahib, and the big fat mare for the big fat Sahib, when they questioned my power. It were as easy to have driven the men themselves. Even now,' his voice lifted a little—'even now I know that behind me stand thy father and Gisborne Sahib. Nay, do not run, for no ten men dare move a pace forward. Remembering that thy father beat thee more than once, shall I give the word and drive him again in rings through the rukh?' A wolf stood up with bared teeth.

Gisborne felt Abdul Gafur tremble at his side. Next, his place was empty, and the fat man was skimming down the glade.

'Remains only Gisborne Sahib,' said Mowgli, still without turning; 'but I have eaten Gisborne Sahib's bread, and presently I shall be in his service, and my brothers will be his servants to drive game and carry the news. Hide thou in the grass.'

The girl fled, the tall grass closed behind her and the guardian wolf that followed, and Mowgli turning with his three retainers faced Gisborne as the Forest Officer came forward.

'That is all the magic,' he said, pointing to the three. 'The fat Sahib knew that we who are bred among wolves run on our elbows and our knees for a season. Feeling my arms and legs, he felt the truth which thou didst not know. Is it so wonderful, Sahib?'

'Indeed it is all more wonderful than magic. These then drove the nilghai?'

'Ay, as they would drive Eblis if I gave the order. They are my eyes and feet to me.'

IN THE RUKH

‘Look to it, then, that Eblis does not carry a double rifle. They have yet something to learn, thy devils, for they stand one behind the other, so that two shots would kill the three.’

‘Ah, but they know they will be thy servants as soon as I am a forest-guard.’

‘Guard or no guard, Mowgli, thou hast done a great shame to Abdul Gafur. Thou hast dishonoured his house and blackened his face.’

‘For that, it was blackened when he took thy money, and made blacker still when he whispered in thy ear a little while since to kill a naked man. I myself will talk to Abdul Gafur, for I am a man of the Government service, with a pension. He shall make the marriage by whatsoever rite he will, or he shall run once more. I will speak to him in the dawn. For the rest, the Sahib has his house and this is mine. It is time to sleep again, Sahib.’

Mowgli turned on his heel and disappeared into the grass, leaving Gisborne alone. The hint of the wood-god was not to be mistaken; and Gisborne went back to the bungalow, where Abdul Gafur, torn by rage and fear, was raving in the veranda.

‘Peace, peace,’ said Gisborne, shaking him, for he looked as though he were going to have a fit. ‘Muller Sahib has made the man a forest-guard, and as thou knowest there is a pension at the end of that business, and it is Government service.’

‘He is an outcaste—a mlech—a dog among dogs; an eater of carrion! What pension can pay for that?’

‘Allah knows; and thou hast heard that the mischief is done. Wouldst thou blaze it to all the other servants? Make the shadi swiftly, and the girl will make him a

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Mussulman. He is very comely. Canst thou wonder that after thy beatings she went to him?’

‘Did he say that he would chase me with his beasts?’

‘So it seemed to me. If he be a wizard, he is at least a very strong one.’

Abdul Gafur thought awhile, and then broke down and howled, forgetting that he was a Mussulman:—

‘Thou art a Brahmin. I am thy cow. Make thou the matter plain, and save my honour if it can be saved!’

A second time then Gisborne plunged into the rukh and called Mowgli. The answer came from high overhead, and in no submissive tones.

‘Speak softly,’ said Gisborne, looking up. ‘There is yet time to strip thee of thy place and hunt thee with thy wolves. The girl must go back to her father’s house to-night. To-morrow there will be the shadi, by the Mussulman law, and then thou canst take her away. Bring her to Abdul Gafur.’

‘I hear.’ There was a murmur of two voices conferring among the leaves. ‘Also, we will obey—for the last time.’

.
A year later Muller and Gisborne were riding through the rukh together, talking of their business. They came out among the rocks near the Kanye stream; Muller riding a little in advance. Under the shade of a thorn thicket sprawled a naked brown baby, and from the brake immediately behind him peered the head of a gray wolf. Gisborne had just time to strike up Muller’s rifle, and the bullet tore spattering through the branches above.

‘Are you mad?’ thundered Muller. ‘Look!’

‘I see,’ said Gisborne quietly. ‘The mother’s somewhere near. You’ll wake the whole pack, by Jove!’

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The bushes parted once more, and a woman unveiled snatched up the child.

‘Who fired, Sahib?’ she cried to Gisborne.

‘This Sahib. He had not remembered thy man’s people.’

‘Not remembered? But indeed it may be so, for we who live with them forget that they are strangers at all. Mowgli is down the stream catching fish. Does the Sahib wish to see him? Come out, ye lacking manners. Come out of the bushes, and make your service to the Sahibs.’

Muller’s eyes grew rounder and rounder. He swung himself off the plunging mare and dismounted, while the jungle gave up four wolves that fawned round Gisborne. The mother stood nursing her child and spurning them aside as they brushed against her bare feet.

‘You were quite right about Mowgli,’ said Gisborne. ‘I meant to have told you, but I’ve got so used to these fellows in the last twelve months that it slipped my mind.’

‘Oh, don’t apologise,’ said Muller. ‘It’s nothing. Gott in Himmel! “Und I work miracles—und dey come off too!” ’

‘BRUGGLESMITH’

(1891)

This day the ship went down, and all hands was drowned but me.—Clark Russell.

THE first officer of the ‘Breslau’ asked me to dinner on board, before the ship went round to Southampton to pick up her passengers. The ‘Breslau’ was lying below London Bridge, her fore-hatches opened for cargo, and her deck littered with nuts and bolts, and screws and chains. The Black M’Phee had been putting some finishing touches to his adored engines, and M’Phee is the most tidy of chief engineers. If the leg of a cockroach gets into one of his slide-valves the whole ship knows it, and half the ship has to clean up the mess.

After dinner, which the first officer, M’Phee, and I ate in one little corner of the empty saloon, M’Phee returned to the engine-room to attend to some brass-fitters. The first officer and I smoked on the bridge and watched the lights of the crowded shipping till it was time for me to go home. It seemed, in the pauses of our conversation, that I could catch an echo of fearful bel-lowsings from the engine-room, and the voice of M’Phee singing of home and the domestic affections.

‘M’Phee has a friend aboard to-night—a man who was a boiler-maker at Greenock when M’Phee was a

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‘prentice,’ said the first officer. ‘I didn’t ask him to dine with us because—’

‘I see—I mean, I hear,’ I answered. We talked on for a few minutes longer, and M’Phee came up from the engine-room with his friend on his arm.

‘Let me present ye to this gentleman,’ said M’Phee. ‘He’s a great admirer o’ your wor-rks. He has just heard o’ them.’

M’Phee could never pay a compliment prettily. The friend sat down suddenly on a bollard, saying that M’Phee had understated the truth. Personally, he considered that Shakespeare was trembling in the balance solely on my account, and if the first officer wished to dispute this he was prepared to fight the first officer then or later, ‘as per invoice.’ ‘Man, if ye only knew,’ said he, wagging his head, ‘the times I’ve lain in my lonely bunk reading “Vanity Fair” an’ sobbin’—ay, weepin’ bitterly at the pure fascination of it.’

He shed a few tears for guarantee of good faith, and the first officer laughed. M’Phee resettled the man’s hat, that had tilted over one eyebrow.

‘That’ll wear off in a little. It’s just the smell o’ the engine-room,’ said M’Phee.

‘I think I’ll wear off myself,’ I whispered to the first officer. ‘Is the dinghy ready?’

The dinghy was at the gangway, which was down, and the first officer went forward to find a man to row me to the bank. He returned with a very sleepy Lascar, who knew the river.

‘Are you going?’ said the man on the bollard. ‘Well, I’ll just see ye home. M’Phee, help me down the gangway. It has as many ends as a cat-o’-nine-tails, and—losh!—how innumerable are the dinghies!’

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‘You’d better let him come with you,’ said the first officer. ‘Muhammad Jan, put the drunk sahib ashore first. Take the sober sahib to the next stairs.’

I had my foot in the bow of the dinghy, the tide was making up-stream, when the man cannoned against me, pushed the Lascar back on the gangway, cast loose the painter, and the dinghy began to saw, stern-first, along the side of the ‘Breslau.’

‘We’ll have no exter-r-raneous races here,’ said the man. ‘I’ve known the Thames for thirty years—’

There was no time for argument. We were drifting under the ‘Breslau’s’ stern, and I knew that her propeller was half out of water, in the middle of an inky tangle of buoys, low-lying hawsers, and moored ships, with the tide ripping through them.

‘What shall I do?’ I shouted to the first officer.

‘Find the Police Boat as soon as you can, and for God’s sake get some way on the dinghy. Steer with the oar. The rudder’s unshipped and—’

I could hear no more. The dinghy slid away, bumped on a mooring-buoy, swung round and jiggled off irresponsibly as I hunted for the oar. The man sat in the bow, his chin on his hands, smiling.

‘Row, you ruffian,’ I said. ‘Get her out into the middle of the river—’

‘It’s a preevilege to gaze on the face o’ genius. Let me go on thinking. There was “Little Bar-rnaby Dorrit” and “The Mystery o’ tñe Bleak Druid.” I sailed in a ship called the “Druid” once—badly found she was. It all comes back to me so sweet. It all comes back to me. Man, ye steer like a genius.’

We bumped round another mooring-buoy and drifted on to the bows of a Norwegian timber-ship—I could see

the great square holes on either side of the cut-water. Then we dived into a string of barges and scraped through them by the paint on our planks. It was a consolation to think that the dinghy was being reduced in value at every bump, but the question before me was when she would begin to leak. The man looked ahead into the pitchy darkness and whistled.

‘Yon’s a Castle liner; her ties are black. She’s swinging across stream. Keep her port light on our starboard bow, and go large,’ he said.

‘How can I keep anything anywhere? You’re sitting on the oars. Row, man, if you don’t want to drown.’

He took the sculls, saying sweetly: ‘No harm comes to a drucken man. That’s why I wished to come wi’ you. Man, ye’re not fit to be alone in a boat.’

He flirted the dinghy round the big ship, and for the next ten minutes I enjoyed—positively enjoyed—an exhibition of first-class steering. We threaded in and out of the mercantile marine of Great Britain as a ferret threads a rabbit-hole, and we, he that is to say, sang joyously to each ship till men looked over bulwarks and cursed us. When we came to some moderately clear water he gave the sculls to me, and said:

‘If ye could row as ye write, I’d respect you for all your vices. Yon’s London Bridge. Take her through.’

We shot under the dark ringing arch, and came out the other side, going up swiftly with the tide, chanting songs of victory. Except that I wished to get home before morning, I was growing reconciled to the jaunt. There were one or two stars visible, and by keeping into the centre of the stream, we could not come to any very serious danger.

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The man began to sing loudly:—

‘The smartest clipper that you could find,

Yo ho! Oho!

Was the “Marg’ret Evans” of the Black X Line,

A hundred years ago!

Incorporate that in your next book, which is marvellous.’

Here he stood up in the bows and declaimed:—

‘Ye Towers o’ Julia, London’s lasting wrong,

By mony a foul an’ midnight murder fed—

Sweet Thames run softly till I end my song—

And yon’s the grave as little as my bed.

I’m a poet mysel’ an’ I can feel for others.’

‘Sit down,’ said I. ‘You’ll have the boat over.’

‘Ay, I’m settin’—settin’ like a hen.’ He plumped down heavily, and added, shaking his forefinger at me:—

‘Lear-rn, prudent, cautious self-control

Is wisdom’s root.

How did a man o’ your parts come to be so drunk? Oh, it’s a sinfu’ thing, an’ ye may thank God on all fours that I’m with you. What’s yon boat?’

We had drifted far up the river, and a boat manned by four men, who rowed with a soothingly regular stroke, was overhauling us.

‘It’s the River Police,’ I said at the top of my voice.

‘Oh ay! If your sin do not find you out on dry land, it will find you out in the deep waters. Is it like they’ll give us drink?’

‘Exceedingly likely. I’ll hail them.’ I hailed.

‘What are you doing?’ was the answer from the boat.

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‘It’s the “Breslau’s” dinghy broken loose,’ I began.

‘It’s a vara drunken man broke loose,’ roared my companion, ‘and I’m taking him home by water, for he cannot stand on dry land.’ Here he shouted my name twenty times running, and I could feel the blushes racing over my body three deep.

‘You’ll be locked up in ten minutes, my friend,’ I said, ‘and I don’t think you’ll be bailed either.’

‘H’sh, man, h’sh. They think I’m your uncle.’ He caught up a scull and began splashing the boat as it ranged alongside.

‘You’re a nice pair,’ said the sergeant at last.

‘I am anything you please so long as you take this fiend away. Tow us in to the nearest station, and I’ll make it worth your while,’ I said.

‘Corruption—corruption,’ roared the man, throwing himself flat in the bottom of the boat. ‘Like unto the worms that perish, so is man! And all for the sake of a filthy half-crown to be arrested by the river police at my time o’ life!’

‘For pity’s sake, row,’ I shouted. ‘The man’s drunk.’

They rowed us to a flat—a fire or a police station; it was too dark to see which. I could feel that they regarded me in no better light than the other man. I could not explain, for I was holding the far end of the painter, and feeling cut off from all respectability.

We got out of the boat, my companion falling flat on his wicked face, and the sergeant asked us rude questions about the dinghy. My companion washed his hands of all responsibility. He was an old man; he had been lured into a stolen boat by a young man—probably a thief—he had saved the boat from wreck (this was absolutely true), and now he expected salvage in the

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shape of hot whisky and water. The sergeant turned to me. Fortunately, I was in evening dress, and had a card to show. More fortunately still, the sergeant happened to know the 'Breslau' and M'Phee. He promised to send the dinghy down next tide, and was not beyond accepting my thanks, in silver.

As this was satisfactorily arranged, I heard my companion say angrily to a constable, 'If you will na give it to a dry man, ye maun to a drookit.' Then he walked deliberately off the edge of the flat into the water. Somebody stuck a boat-hook into his clothes and hauled him out.

'Now,' said he triumphantly, 'under the rules o' the R-royal Humane Society, ye must give me hot whisky and water. Do not put temptation before the laddie. He's my nephew an' a good boy i' the main. Tho' why he should masquerade as Mister Thackeray on the high seas is beyond my comprehension. Oh the vanity o' youth! M'Phee told me ye were as vain as a peacock. I mind that now.'

'You had better give him something to drink and wrap him up for the night. I don't know who he is,' I said desperately, and when the man had settled down to a drink supplied on my representations, I escaped and found that I was near a bridge.

I went towards Fleet Street, intending to take a hansom and go home. After the first feeling of indignation died out, the absurdity of the experience struck me fully and I began to laugh aloud in the empty streets, to the scandal of a policeman. The more I reflected the more heartily I laughed, till my mirth was quenched by a hand on my shoulder, and turning I saw him who should have been in bed at the river police-station. He was damp all over; his wet silk hat rode far at the back of

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his head, and round his shoulders hung a striped yellow blanket, evidently the property of the State.

‘The crackling o’ thorns under a pot,’ said he, solemnly. ‘Laddie, have ye not thought o’ the sin of idle laughter? My heart misgave me that ever ye’d get home, an’ I’ve just come to convoy you a piece. They’re sore uneducate down there by the river. They wouldna listen to me when I talked o’ your worrks, so I e’en left them. Cast the blanket about you, laddie. It’s fine and cold.’

I groaned inwardly. Providence evidently intended that I should frolic through eternity with M’Phee’s infamous acquaintance.

‘Go away,’ I said; ‘go home, or I’ll give you in charge!’

He leaned against a lamp-post and laid his finger to his nose—his dishonourable, carnelian neb.

‘I mind now that M’Phee told me ye were vainer than a peacock, an’ your castin’ me adrift in a boat shows ye were drunker than an owl. A good name is as a savoury bakemeat. I ha’ nane.’ He smacked his lips joyously.

‘Well, I know that,’ I said.

‘Ay, but ye have. I mind now that M’Phee spoke o’ your reputation that you’re so proud of. Laddie, if ye gie me in charge—I’m old enough to be your father—I’ll bla-ast your reputation as far as my voice can carry; for I’ll call you by name till the cows come hame. It’s no jestin’ matter to be a friend to me. If you discard my friendship, ye must come to Vine Street wi’ me for stealin’ the “Breslau’s” dinghy.’

Then he sang at the top of his voice:—

‘In the mornnin’

I’ the mornnin’ by the black van—

We’ll toddle up to Vine Street i’ the mornnin’!

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Yon's my own composeetion, but I'm not vain. We'll go home together, laddie, we'll go home together.' And he sang 'Auld Lang Syne' to show that he meant it.

A policeman suggested that we had better move on, and we moved on to the Law Courts near St. Clement Danes. My companion was quieter now, and his speech, which up till that time had been distinct—it was a marvel to hear how in his condition he could talk dialect—began to slur and slide and slummock. He bade me observe the architecture of the Law Courts and linked himself lovingly to my arm. Then he saw a policeman, and before I could shake him off, whirled me up to the man singing:—

'Every member of the Force
Has a watch and chain of course—'

and threw his dripping blanket over the helmet of the Law. In any other country in the world we should have run an exceedingly good chance of being shot, or dirked, or clubbed—and clubbing is worse than being shot. But I reflected in that wet-cloth tangle that this was England, where the police are made to be banged and battered and bruised, that they may the better endure a police-court reprimand next morning. We three fell in a festoon, he calling on me by name—that was the tingling horror of it—to sit on the policeman's head and cut the traces. I wriggled clear first and shouted to the policeman to kill the blanket-man.

Naturally the policeman answered: 'You're as bad as 'im,' and chased me, as the smaller man, round St. Clement Danes into Holywell Street, where I ran into the arms of another policeman. That flight could not have lasted more than a minute and a half, but it seemed

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to me as long and as wearisome as the foot-bound flight of a nightmare. I had leisure to think of a thousand things as I ran; but most I thought of the great and god-like man who held a sitting in the north gallery of St. Clement Danes a hundred odd years ago. I know that he at least would have felt for me. So occupied was I with these considerations, that when the other policeman hugged me to his bosom and said: ‘What are you tryin’ to do?’ I answered with exquisite politeness: ‘Sir, let us take a walk down Fleet Street.’ ‘Bow Street’ll do your business, I think,’ was the answer, and for a moment I thought so too, till it seemed I might scuffle out of it. Then there was a hideous scene, and it was complicated by my companion hurrying up with the blanket and telling me—always by name—that he would rescue me or perish in the attempt.

‘Knock him down,’ I pleaded. ‘Club his head open first and I’ll explain afterwards.’

The first policeman, the one who had been outraged, drew his truncheon and cut at my companion’s head. The high silk hat crackled and the owner dropped like a log.

‘Now you’ve done it,’ I said. ‘You’ve probably killed him.’

Holywell Street never goes to bed. A small crowd gathered on the spot and some one of German extraction shrieked: ‘You haf killed the man.’

Another cried: ‘Take his bloomin’ number. I saw him strook cruel ’ard. Yah!’

Now the street was empty when the trouble began, and, saving the two policemen and myself, no one had seen the blow. I said, therefore, in a loud and cheerful voice:—

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'The man's a friend of mine. He's fallen down in a fit. Bobby, will you bring the ambulance?' Under my breath I added: 'It's five shillings apiece, and the man didn't hit you.'

'No, but 'im and you tried to scrob me,' said the policeman.

This was not a thing to argue about.

'Is Dempsey on duty at Charing Cross?' I said.

'Wot d'you know of Dempsey, you bloomin' garrotter?' said the policeman.

'If Dempsey's there, he knows me. Get the ambulance quick, and I'll take him to Charing Cross.'

'You're coming to Bow Street, you are,' said the policeman crisply.

'The man's dying'—he lay groaning on the pavement—'get the ambulance,' said I.

There is an ambulance at the back of St. Clement Danes, whereof I know more than most people. The policeman seemed to possess the keys of the box in which it lived. We trundled it out—it was a three-wheeled affair with a hood—and we bundled the body of the man upon it.

A body in an ambulance looks very extremely dead. The policemen softened at the sight of the stiff boot-heels.

'Now then,' said they, and I fancied that they still meant Bow Street.

'Let me see Dempsey for three minutes if he's on duty,' I answered.

'Very good. He is.'

Then I knew that all would be well, but before we started I put my head under the ambulance-hood to see if the man were alive. A guarded whisper came to my ear.

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‘Laddie, you maun pay me for a new hat. They’ve broken it. Dinna desert me now, laddie. I’m o’er old to go to Bow Street in my gray hairs for a fault of yours. Laddie, dinna desert me.’

‘You’ll be lucky if you get off under seven years,’ I said to the policeman.

Moved by a very lively fear of having exceeded their duty, the two policemen left their beats, and the mournful procession wound down the empty Strand. Once west of the Adelphi, I knew I should be in my own country; and the policemen had reason to know that too, for as I was pacing proudly a little ahead of the catafalque, another policeman said ‘Good-night, sir,’ to me as he passed.

‘Now, you see,’ I said, with condescension, ‘I wouldn’t be in your shoes for something. On my word, I’ve a great mind to march you two down to Scotland Yard.’

‘If the gentleman’s a friend o’ yours, per’aps—’ said the policeman who had given the blow, and was reflecting on the consequences.

‘Perhaps you’d like me to go away and say nothing about it,’ I said. Then there hove into view the figure of Constable Dempsey, glittering in his oil-skins, and an angel of light to me. I had known him for months; he was an esteemed friend of mine, and we used to talk together in the early mornings. The fool seeks to ingratiate himself with Princes and Ministers; and courts and cabinets leave him to perish miserably. The wise man makes allies among the police and the hansoms, so that his friends spring up from the round-house and the cab-rank, and even his offences become triumphal processions.

‘Dempsey,’ said I, ‘have the police been on strike

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again? They've put some things on duty at St. Clement Danes that want to take me to Bow Street for garrotting.'

'Lor, sir!' said Dempsey indignantly.

'Tell them I'm not a garrotter, nor a thief. It's simply disgraceful that a gentleman can't walk down the Strand without being man-handled by these roughs. One of them has done his best to kill my friend here; and I'm taking the body home. Speak for me, Dempsey.'

There was no time for the much-misrepresented policemen to say a word. Dempsey spoke to them in language calculated to frighten. They tried to explain, but Dempsey launched into a glowing catalogue of my virtues, as noted by gas in the early hours. 'And,' he concluded vehemently, 'e writes for the papers, too. How'd you like to be written about in the papers—in verse, too, which is 'is 'abit. You leave 'im alone. 'Im an' me have been friends for months.'

'What about the dead man?' said the policeman who had not given the blow.

'I'll tell you,' I said relenting, and to the three policemen under the lights of Charing Cross assembled, I recounted faithfully and at length the adventures of the night, beginning with the 'Breslau' and ending at St. Clement Danes. I described the sinful old ruffian in the ambulance in words that made him wriggle where he lay, and never since the Metropolitan Police was founded did three policemen laugh as those three laughed. The Strand echoed to it, and the unclean birds of the night stood and wondered.

'Oh lor'!' said Dempsey, wiping his eyes, 'I'd ha' given anything to see that old man runnin' about with a wet blanket an' all! Excuse me, sir, but you ought to

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get took up every night for to make us ‘appy.’ He dissolved into fresh guffaws.

There was a clinking of silver and the two policemen of St. Clement Danes hurried back to their beats, laughing as they ran.

‘Take ‘im to Charing Cross,’ said Dempsey between shouts. ‘They’ll send the ambulance back in the morning.’

‘Laddie, ye’ve misca’ed me shameful names, but I’m o’er old to go to a hospital. Dinna desert me, laddie. Tak me home to my wife,’ said the voice in the ambulance.

‘He’s none so bad. ‘Is wife’ll comb ‘is hair for ‘im proper,’ said Dempsey, who was a married man.

‘Where d’you live?’ I demanded.

‘Brugglesmith,’ was the answer.

‘What’s that?’ I said to Dempsey, more skilled than I in portmanteau-words.

‘Brook Green, ‘Ammersmith,’ Dempsey translated promptly.

‘Of course,’ I said. ‘That’s just the sort of place he would choose to live in. I only wonder that it was not Kew.’

‘Are you going to wheel him ‘ome, sir,’ said Dempsey.

‘I’d wheel him home if he lived in—Paradise. He’s not going to get out of this ambulance while I’m here. He’d drag me into a murder for tuppence.’

‘Then strap ‘im up an’ make sure,’ said Dempsey, and he deftly buckled two straps that hung by the side of the ambulance over the man’s body. Brugglesmith—I know not his other name—was sleeping deeply. He even smiled in his sleep.

‘That’s all right,’ said Dempsey, and I moved off,

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wheeling my devil's perambulator before me. Trafalgar Square was empty except for the few that slept in the open. One of these wretches ranged alongside and begged for money, asserting that he had been a gentleman once.

'So have I,' I said. 'That was long ago. I'll give you a shilling if you'll help me to push this thing.'

'Is it a murder?' said the vagabond, shrinking back. 'I've not got to that yet.'

'No, it's going to be one,' I answered. 'I have.'

The man slunk back into the darkness and I pressed on, through Cockspur Street, and up to Piccadilly Circus, wondering what I should do with my treasure. All London was asleep, and I had only this drunken carcase to bear me company. It was silent—silent as chaste Piccadilly. A young man of my acquaintance came out of a pink brick club as I passed. A faded carnation drooped from his button-hole; he had been playing cards, and was walking home before the dawn, when he overtook me.

'What are you doing?' he said.

I was far beyond any feeling of shame. 'It's for a bet,' said I. 'Come and help.'

'Laddie, who's yon?' said the voice beneath the hood.

'Good Lord!' said the young man, leaping across the pavement. Perhaps card-losses had told on his nerves. Mine were steel that night.

'The Lord, The Lord?' the passionless, incurious voice went on. 'Dinna be profane, laddie. He'll come in His ain good time.'

The young man looked at me with horror.

'It's all part of the bet,' I answered. 'Do come and push!'

‘BRUGGLESMITH’

‘W—where are you going to?’ said he.

‘Brugglesmith,’ said the voice within. ‘Laddie, d’ye ken my wife?’

‘No,’ said I.

‘Well, she’s just a tremenjuss wumman. Laddie, I want a drink. Knock at one o’ those braw houses, laddie, an’—an’—ye may kiss the girrl for your pains.’

‘Lie still, or I’ll gag you,’ I said, savagely.

The young man with the carnation crossed to the other side of Piccadilly, and hailed the only hansom visible for miles. What he thought I cannot tell.

I pressed on—wheeling, eternally wheeling—to Brook Green, Hammersmith. There I would abandon Brugglesmith to the gods of that desolate land. We had been through so much together that I could not leave him bound in the street. Besides, he would call after me, and oh! it is a shameful thing to hear one’s name ringing down the emptiness of London in the dawn.

So I went on, past Apsley House, even to the coffee-stall, but there was no coffee for Brugglesmith. And into Knightsbridge—respectable Knightsbridge—I wheeled my burden, the body of Brugglesmith.

‘Laddie, what are ye going to do wi’ me?’ he said when opposite the barracks.

‘Kill you,’ I said briefly, ‘or hand you over to your wife. Be quiet.’

He would not obey. He talked incessantly—sliding in one sentence from clear-cut dialect to wild and drunken jumble. At the Albert Hall he said that I was the ‘Hattle Gardle buggle,’ which I apprehend is the Hatton Garden burglar. At Kensington High Street he loved me as a son, but when my weary legs came to the Addison Road Bridge he implored me with tears to unloose

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the straps and to fight against the sin of vanity. No man molested us. It was as though a bar had been set between myself and all humanity till I had cleared my account with Brugglesmith. The glimmering of light grew in the sky; the cloudy brown of the wood pavement turned to heather-purple; I made no doubt that I should be allowed vengeance on Brugglesmith ere the evening.

At Hammersmith the heavens were steel-gray, and the day came weeping. All the tides of the sadness of an unprofitable dawning poured into the soul of Brugglesmith. He wept bitterly, because the puddles looked cold and houseless. I entered a half-waked public-house—in evening dress and an ulster, I marched to the bar—and got him whisky on condition that he should cease kicking at the canvas of the ambulance. Then he wept more bitterly, for that he had ever been associated with me, and so seduced into stealing the ‘Breslau’s’ dinghy.

The day was white and wan when I reached my long journey’s end, and, putting back the hood, bade Brugglesmith declare where he lived. His eyes wandered disconsolately round the red and gray houses till they fell on a villa in whose garden stood a staggering board with the legend ‘To Let.’ It needed only this to break him down utterly, and with the breakage fled his fine fluency in his guttural northern tongue; for liquor levels all.

‘Olely lil while,’ he sobbed. ‘Olely lil while. Home—falmy—besht of falmies—wife too—you dole know my wife! Left them all a lil while ago. Now everything’s sold—all sold. Wife—falmy—all sold. Lemmegellup!’

I unbuckled the straps cautiously. Brugglesmith rolled off his resting-place and staggered to the house.

‘BRUGGLESMITH’

‘Wattle I do?’ he said.

Then I understood the baser depths in the mind of Mephistopheles.

‘Ring,’ I said; ‘perhaps they are in the attic or the cellar.’

‘You do’ know my wife. She shleeps on soful in the dorlin’ room, waiting meculhome. You do’ know my wife.’

He took off his boots, covered them with his tall hat, and craftily as a Red Indian picked his way up the garden path and smote the bell marked ‘Visitors’ a severe blow with the clenched fist.

‘Bell sole too. Sole electick bell! Wassor bell this? I can’t riggle bell,’ he moaned despairingly.

‘You pull it—pull it hard,’ I repeated, keeping a wary eye down the road. Vengeance was coming and I desired no witnesses.

‘Yes, I’ll pull it hard.’ He slapped his forehead with inspiration. ‘I’ll put it out.’

Leaning back he grasped the knob with both hands and pulled. A wild ringing in the kitchen was his answer. Spitting on his hands he pulled with renewed strength, and shouted for his wife. Then he bent his ear to the knob, shook his head, drew out an enormous yellow and red handkerchief, tied it round the knob, turned his back to the door, and pulled over his shoulder.

Either the handkerchief or the wire, it seemed to me, was bound to give way. But I had forgotten the bell. Something cracked in the kitchen, and Brugglesmith moved slowly down the doorsteps, pulling valiantly. Three feet of wire followed him.

‘Pull, oh pull!’ I cried. ‘It’s coming now.’

‘Qui’ ri’,’ he said. ‘I’ll riggle bell.’

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He bowed forward, the wire creaking and straining behind him, the bell-knob clasped to his bosom, and from the noises within I fancied the bell was taking away with it half the woodwork of the kitchen and all the basement banisters.

‘Get a purchase on her,’ I shouted, and he spun round, lapping that good copper wire about him. I opened the garden gate politely, and he passed out, spinning his own cocoon. Still the bell came up, hand over hand, and still the wire held fast. He was in the middle of the road, now, whirling like an impaled cockchafer, and shouting madly for his wife and family. There he met with the ambulance, the bell within the house gave one last peal, and bounded from the far end of the hall to the inner side of the hall-door, where it stayed fast. So did not my friend Brugglesmith. He fell upon his face, embracing the ambulance as he did so, and the two turned over together in the toils of the never-sufficiently-to-be-advertised copper wire.

‘Laddie,’ he gasped, his speech returning, ‘have I a legal remedy?’

‘I will go and look for one,’ I said, and, departing, found two policemen. These I told that daylight had surprised a burglar in Brook Green while he was engaged in stealing lead from an empty house. Perhaps they had better take care of that bootless thief. He seemed to be in difficulties.

I led the way to the spot, and behold! in the splendour of the dawning, the ambulance, wheels uppermost, was walking down the muddy road on two stockinged feet—was shuffling to and fro in a quarter of a circle whose radius was copper wire, and whose centre was the bell-plate of the empty house.

‘BRUGGLES MITH’

Next to the amazing ingenuity with which Brugglesmith had contrived to lash himself under the ambulance, the thing that appeared to impress the constables most was the fact of the St. Clement Danes ambulance being at Brook Green, Hammersmith.

They even asked me, of all people in the world, whether I knew anything about it!

They extricated him; not without pain and dirt. He explained that he was repelling boarding-attacks by a ‘Hattle Gardle buggle’ who had sold his house, wife, and family. As to the bell-wire, he offered no explanation, and was borne off shoulder-high between the two policemen. Though his feet were not within six inches of the ground, they paddled swiftly, and I saw that in his magnificent mind he was running—furiously running.

Sometimes I have wondered whether he wished to find me.

‘LOVE-O’-WOMEN’

(1893)

‘A lamentable tale of things
Done long ago, and ill done.’

THE horror, the confusion, and the separation of the murderer from his comrades were all over before I came. There remained only on the barrack-square the blood of man calling from the ground. The hot sun had dried it to a dusky goldbeater-skin film, cracked lozenge-wise by the heat; and as the wind rose, each lozenge, rising a little, curled up at the edges as if it were a dumb tongue. Then a heavier gust blew all away down wind in grains of dark-coloured dust. It was too hot to stand in the sunshine before breakfast. The men were in barracks talking the matter over. A knot of soldiers’ wives stood by one of the entrances to the married quarters, while inside a woman shrieked and raved with wicked filthy words.

A quiet and well-conducted sergeant had shot down, in broad daylight just after early parade, one of his own corporals, had then returned to barracks and sat on a cot till the guard came for him. He would, therefore, in due time be handed over to the High Court for trial. Further, but this he could hardly have considered in his scheme of revenge, he would horribly upset my work;

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for the reporting of that trial would fall on me without a relief. What that trial would be like I knew even to weariness. There would be the rifle carefully uncleaned, with the fouling marks about breech and muzzle, to be sworn to by half a dozen superfluous privates; there would be heat, reeking heat, till the wet pencil slipped sideways between the fingers; and the punkah would swish and the pleaders would jabber in the verandas, and his Commanding Officer would put in certificates to the prisoner's moral character, while the jury would pant and the summer uniforms of the witnesses would smell of dye and soaps; and some abject barrack-sweeper would lose his head in cross-examination, and the young barrister who always defended soldiers' cases for the credit that they never brought him, would say and do wonderful things, and would then quarrel with me because I had not reported him correctly. At the last, for he surely would not be hanged, I might meet the prisoner again, ruling blank account-forms in the Central Jail, and cheer him with the hope of his being made a warder in the Andamans.

The Indian Penal Code and its interpreters do not treat murder, under any provocation whatever, in a spirit of jest. Sergeant Raines would be very lucky indeed if he got off with seven years, I thought. He had slept the night upon his wrongs, and killed his man at twenty yards before any talk was possible. That much I knew. Unless, therefore, the case was doctored a little, seven years would be his least; and I fancied it was exceedingly well for Sergeant Raines that he had been liked by his Company.

That same evening—no day is so long as the day of a murder—I met Ortheris with the dogs, and he plunged

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defiantly into the middle of the matter. 'I'll be one o' the witnesses,' said he. 'I was in the veranda when Mackie come along. 'E come from Mrs. Raines's quarters. Quigley, Parsons, an' Trot, they was in the inside veranda, so they couldn't 'ave 'eard nothing. Sergeant Raines was in the veranda talkin' to me, an' Mackie 'e come along acrost the square an' 'e sez, "Well," sez 'e, "'ave they pushed your 'elmet off yet, Sergeant?" 'e sez. An' at that Raines 'e catches 'is breath an' 'e sez, "My Gawd, I can't stand this!" sez 'e, an' 'e picks up my rifle an' shoots Mackie. See?'

'But what were you doing with your rifle in the outer veranda an hour after parade?'

'Cleanin' 'er,' said Ortheris, with the sullen brassy stare that always went with his choicer lies.

He might aswell have said that he was dancing naked, for at no time did his rifle need hand or rag on her twenty minutes after parade. Still, the High Court would not know his routine.

'Are you going to stick to that—on the Book?' I asked.

'Yes. Like a bloomin' leech.'

'All right, I don't want to know any more. Only remember that Quigley, Parsons, and Trot couldn't have been where you say without hearing something; and there's nearly certain to be a barrack-sweeper who was knocking about the square at the time. There always is.'

''Twasn't the sweeper. It was the beastie. 'E's all right.'

Then I knew that there was going to be some spirited doctoring, and I felt sorry for the Government Advocate who would conduct the prosecution.

‘LOVE-O’-WOMEN’

When the trial came on I pitied him more, for he was always quick to lose his temper and made a personal matter of each lost cause. Raines's young barrister had for once put aside his unslaked and welling passion for alibis and insanity, had forsworn gymnastics and fireworks, and worked soberly for his client. Mercifully the hot weather was yet young, and there had been no flagrant cases of barrack-shootings up to the time; and the jury was a good one, even for an Indian jury, where nine men out of every twelve are accustomed to weighing evidence. Ortheris stood firm and was not shaken by any cross-examination. The one weak point in his tale—the presence of his rifle in the outer veranda—went unchallenged by civilian wisdom, though some of the witnesses could not help smiling. The Government Advocate called for the rope, contending throughout that the murder had been a deliberate one. Time had passed, he argued, for that reflection which comes so naturally to a man whose honour is lost. There was also the Law, ever ready and anxious to right the wrongs of the common soldier if, indeed, wrong had been done. But he doubted much whether there had been any sufficient wrong. Causeless suspicion over-long brooded upon had led, by his theory, to deliberate crime. But his attempts to minimise the motive failed. The most disconnected witness knew—had known for weeks—the causes of offence; and the prisoner, who naturally was the last of all to know, groaned in the dock while he listened. The one question that the trial circled round was whether Raines had fired under sudden and blinding provocation given that very morning; and in the summing-up it was clear that Ortheris's evidence told. He had contrived most artistically to suggest that he

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personally hated the Sergeant, who had come into the veranda to give him a talking to for insubordination. In a weak moment the Government Advocate asked one question too many. 'Beggin' your pardon, sir,' Ortheris replied, ' 'e was callin' me a dam' impudent little lawyer.' The Court shook. The jury brought it in a killing, but with every provocation and extenuation known to God or man, and the Judge put his hand to his brow before giving sentence, and the Adam's apple in the prisoner's throat went up and down like mercury pumping before a cyclone.

In consideration of all considerations, from his Commanding Officer's certificate of good conduct to the sure loss of pension, service, and honour, the prisoner would get two years, to be served in India, and—there need be no demonstration in Court. The Government Advocate scowled and picked up his papers; the guard wheeled with a clash, and the prisoner was relaxed to the Secular Arm, and driven to the jail in a broken-down ticca-gharri.

His guard and some ten or twelve military witnesses, being less important, were ordered to wait till what was officially called the cool of the evening before marching back to cantonments. They gathered together in one of the deep red-brick verandas of a disused lock-up and congratulated Ortheris, who bore his honours modestly. I sent my work into the office and joined them. Ortheris watched the Government Advocate driving off to lunch.

'That's a nasty little bald-'eaded little butcher, that is,' he said. ' 'E don't please me. 'E's got a colley dot wot do, though. I'm goin' up to Murree in a week. That dawg'll bring fifteen rupees anywheres.'

'You had better spend ut in Masses,' said Terence,

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unbuckling his belt; for he had been on the prisoner’s guard, standing helmeted and bolt upright for three long hours.

‘Not me,’ said Ortheris cheerfully. ‘Gawd’ll put it down to B Comp’ny’s barrick-damages one o’ these days. You look strapped, Terence.’

‘Faith, I’m not so young as I was. That guard-mountin’ wears on the sole av the fut, and this’—he sniffed contemptuously at the brick veranda—‘is as hard setting as standin’!’

‘Wait a minute. I’ll get the cushions out of my cart,’ I said.

‘Strewth—sofies. We’re going it gay,’ said Ortheris, as Terence dropped himself section by section on the leather cushions, saying prettily, ‘May ye niver want a soft place wheriver you go, an’ power to share ut wid a frind. Another for yourself? That’s good. It lets me sit longways. Stanley, pass me a pipe. Augrrh! An’ that’s another man gone all to pieces bekaze av a woman. I must ha’ been on forty or fifty prisoners’ gyards, first an’ last; an’ I hate ut new ivry time.’

‘Let’s see. You were on Losson’s, Lancey’s, Dugard’s, and Stebbins’s, that I can remember,’ I said.

‘Ay, an’ before that an’ before that—scores av thim,’ he answered with a worn smile. ‘’Tis better to die than to live for them, though. Whin Raines comes out—he’ll be changin’ his kit at the jail now—he’ll think that too. He shud ha’ shot himself an’ the woman by rights an’ made a clean bill av all. Now he’s left the woman—she tuk tay wid Dinah Sunday gone last—an’ he’s left himself. Mackie’s the lucky man.’

‘He’s probably getting it hot where he is,’ I ventured, for I knew something of the dead Corporal’s record.

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‘Be sure av that,’ said Terence, spitting over the edge of the veranda. ‘But fwhat he’ll get there is light marchin’-ordher to fwhat he’d ha’ got here if he’d lived.’

‘Surely not. He’d have gone on and forgotten—like the others.’

‘Did ye know Mackie well, sorr?’ said Terence.

‘He was on the Pattiala guard of honour last winter, and I went out shooting with him in an ekka for the day, and I found him rather an amusing man.’

‘Well, he’ll ha’ got shut av amusemints, excipt turnin’ from wan side to the other, these few years to come. I knew Mackie, an’ I’ve seen too many to be mistuk in the muster av wan man. He might ha’ gone on an’ forgot as you say, sorr, but he was a man wid an educashin, an’ he used ut for his schames; an’ the same educashin, an’ talkin’, an’ all that made him able to do fwhat he had a mind to wid a woman, that same wud turn back again in the long-run an’ tear him alive. I can’t say fwhat that I mane to say bekaze I don’t know how, but Mackie was the spit an’ livin’ image av a man that I saw march the same march all but; an’ ’twas worse for him that he did not come by Mackie’s ind. Wait while I remember now. ’Twas whin I was in the Black Tyrone, an’ he was drafted us from Portsmouth; an’ fwhat was his misbegotten name? Larry—Larry Tighe ut was; an’ wan of the draft said he was a gentleman-ranker, an’ Larry tuk an’ three-parts killed him for saying so. An’ he was a big man, an’ a strong man, an’ a handsome man, an’ that tells heavy in practice wid some women, but, takin’ them by and large, not wid all. Yet ’twas wid all that Larry dealt—all—for he cud put the comether on any woman that trod the green earth av God, an’ he knew ut. Like Mackie that’s roastin’ now, he knew ut,

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an’ niver did he put the comether on any woman save an’ excipt for the black shame. ’Tis not me that shud be talkin’, dear knows, dear knows, but the most av my mis—misallinces was for pure devilry, an’ mighty sorry I have been whin harm came; an’ time an’ again wid a girl, ay, an’ a woman too, for the matter av that, whin I have seen by the eyes av her that I was makin’ more throuble than I talked, I have hild off an’ let be for the sake av the mother that bore me. But Larry, I’m thinkin’, he was suckled by a she-devil, for he never let wan go that came nigh to listen to him. ’Twas his business, as if it might ha’ ben sinthry-go. He was a good soldier too. Now there was the Colonel’s governess—an’ he a privit too!—that was never known in barricks; an’ wan av the Major’s maids, and she was promised to a man; an’ some more outside; an’ fwhat ut was amongst us we’ll never know till Judgment Day. ’Twas the nature av the haste to put the comether on the best av thim—not the prettiest by any manner av manes—but the like av such women as you cud lay your hand on the Book an’ swear there was niver thought av foolishness in. An’ for that very reason, mark you, he was niver caught. He came close to ut wanst or twice, but caught he niver was, an’ that cost him more at the ind than the beginnin’. He talked to me more than most, bekaze he tould me, barrin’ the accident av my educashin, I’d av been the same kind av divil he was. “An’ is ut like,” he wud say, houldin’ his head high—“is ut like that I’d iver be thrapped? For fwhat am I when all’s said an’ done?” he sez. “A damned privit,” sez he. “An’ is ut like, think you, that thim I know wud be connect wid a privit like me? Number tin thousand four hundred an’ sivin,” he sez grinnin’. I knew by the turn av his

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spache when he was not takin' care to talk rough-shod that he was a gentleman-ranker.

' "I do not undherstan' ut at all," I sez; "but I know, sez I, "that the divil looks out av your eyes, an' I'll have no share wid you. A little fun by way av amusemint where 'twill do no harm, Larry, is right and fair, but I am mistook if 'tis any amusemint to you," I sez.

' "You are much mistook," he sez. "An' I counsel you not to judge your betters."

' "My betthers!" I sez. "God help you, Larry. There's no betther in this; 'tis all bad, as ye will find for yoursilf."

' "You're not like me," he says, tossin' his head.

' "Praise the Saints, I am not," I sez. "Fwhat I have done I have done an' been crool sorry for. Fwhin your time comes," sez I, "ye'll remimber fwhat I say."

' "An' whin that time comes," sez he, "I'll come to you for ghostly consolation, Father Terence," an' at that he wint off afther some more divil's business—for to get expayrience, he tould me. He was wicked—rank wicked—wicked as all Hell! I'm not construct by nature to go in fear av any man, but, begad, I was afraid av Larry. He'd come in to barricks wid his cap on three hairs, an' lie on his cot and stare at the ceilin', and now an' again he'd fetch a little laugh, the like av a splash in the bottom av a well, an' by that I knew he was schamin' new wickedness, an' I'd be afraid. All this was long an' long ago, but ut hild me straight—for a while.

' I tould you, did I not, sorr, that I was caressed an' persuaded to lave the Tyrone on account av a throuble?'

' Something to do with a belt and a man's head, wasn't it?' Terence had never given the tale in full.

' It was. Faith, ivry time I go on prisoner's gyard in

‘LOVE-O’-WOMEN’

coort I wondher fwwhy I was not where the pris’ner is. But the man I struk tuk it in fair fight, an’ he had the good sinse not to die. Considher now, fwwhat wud ha’ come to the Arrmy if he had! I was enthreated to exchange, an’ my Commandin’ Orf’cer pled wid me. I wint, not to be disobligin’, an’ Larry tould me he was powerful sorry to lose me, though fwwhat I’d done to make him sorry I do not know. So to the Ould Reg’-mint I came, lavin’ Larry to go to the divil his own way, an’ niver expectin’ to see him again excipt as a shootin’-case in barracks. . . . Who’s that quittin’ the compound?’ Terence’s quick eye had caught sight of a white uniform skulking behind the hedge.

‘The Sergeant’s gone visiting,’ said a voice.

‘Thin I command here, an’ I will have no sneakin’ away to the bazar, an’ huntin’ for you wid a pathrol at midnight. Nalson, for I know ut’s you, come back to the veranda.’

Nalson, detected, slunk back to his fellows. There was a grumble that died away in a minute or two, and Terence turning on the other side went on:—

‘That was the last I saw av Larry for a while. Exchange is the same as death for not thinkin’, an’ by token I married Dinah, an’ that kept me from remimberin’ ould times. Thin we went up to the Front, an’ ut tore my heart in tu to lave Dinah at the Depot in Pindi. Consequint, whin I was at the Front I fought circumspectuous till I warrmed up, an’ thin I fought double tides. You remember fwwhat I tould you in the gyard-gate av the fight at Silver’s Theatre?’

‘Wot’s that about Silver’s Theayter?’ said Ortheris quickly, over his shoulder.

‘Nothin’, little man. A tale that ye know. As I was

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sayin', afther that fight, us av the Ould Rig'mint an' the Tyrone was all mixed together takin' shtock av the dead, an' av coorse I wint about to find if there was any man that remembered me. The second man I came acrost—an' how I'd missed him in the fight I do not know—was Larry, an' a fine man he looked, but oulder, by reason that he had fair call to be. "Larry," sez I, "how is ut wid you?"

"Ye're callin' the wrong man," he sez, wid his gentleman's smile, "Larry has been dead these three years. They call him 'Love-o'-Women' now," he sez. By that I knew the ould divil was in him yet, but the ind av a fight is no time for the beginnin' av confession, so we sat down an' talked av times.

"They tell me you're a married man," he sez, puffin' slow at his poipe. "Are ye happy?"

"I will be whin I get back to Depot," I sez. "'Tis a reconnaissence-honeymoon now."

"I'm married too," he sez, puffin' slow an' more slow, an' stopperin' wid his forefinger.

"Send you happiness," I sez. "That's the best hearin' for a long time."

"Are ye av that opinion?" he sez; an' thin he began talkin' av the campaign. The sweat av Silver's Theatre was not dhry upon him an' he was prayin' for more work. I was well contint to lie and listen to the cook-pot lids.

Whin he got up off the ground he shtaggered a little, an' laned over all twisted.

"Ye've got more than ye bargained for," I sez. "Take an inventory, Larry. 'Tis like you're hurt."

He turned round stiff as a ramrod an' damned the eyes av me up an' down for an impertinent Irish-faced ape. If that had been in barracks, I'd ha' stretched

him an’ no more said; but ’twas at the Front, an’ afther such a fight as Silver’s Theatre I knew there was no callin’ a man to account for his tempers. He might as well ha’ kissed me. Aftherwards I was well pleased I kept my fists home. Thin our Captain Crook—Cruik-na-bulleen—came up. He’d been talkin’ to the little orf’cer bhoy av the Tyrone. “We’re all cut to windy-straws,” he sez, “but the Tyrone are damned short for non-coms. Go you over there, Mulvaney, an’ be Deputy-Sergeant, Corp’ral, Lance, an’ everything else ye can lay hands on till I bid you stop.”

‘I wint over an’ tuk hould. There was wan sergeant left standin’, an’ they’d pay no heed to him. The remint was me, an’ ’twas full time I came. Some I talked to, an’ some I did not, but before night the bhoys av the Tyrone stud to attention, begad, if I sucked on my poipe above a whishper. Betune you an’ me an’ Bobbs I was commandin’ the Company, an’ that was what Crook had thransferred me for; an’ the little orf’cer bhoy knew ut, and I knew ut, but the Comp’ny did not. And there, mark you, is the vartue that no money an’ no dhrill can buy—the vartue av the ould soldier that knows his orf’cer’s work an’ does ut for him at the salute!

‘Thin the Tyrone, wid the Ould Rig’mint in touch, was sint maraudin’ an’ prowlin’ acrost the hills promiscuous an’ onsatisfactory. ’Tis my privit opinion that a gin’ral does not know half his time fwhat to do wid three-quarthers his command. So he shquats on his hunkers an’ bids them run round an’ round forninst him while he considhers on it. Whin by the process av nature they get sejuiced into a big fight that was none av their seekin’, he sez: “Obsarve my shuperior janius. I meant ut to come so.” We ran round an’ about, an’ all

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we got was shootin' into the camp 'at night, an' rushin' empty sungars wid the long bradawl, an' bein' hit from behind rocks till we was wore out—all excipt Love-o'-Women. That puppy-dog business was mate an' dhrink to him. Begad he cud niver get enough av ut. Me well knowin' that it is just this desultorial campaignin' that kills the best men, an' suspicionin' that if I was cut, the little orf'cer bhoy wud expind all his men in thryin' to get out, I wud lie most powerful doggo whin I heard a shot, an' curl my long legs behind a bowlder, an' run like blazes whin the ground was clear. Faith, if I led the Tyrone in rethreat wanst I led thim forty times! Love-o'-Women wud stay pottin' an' pottin' from behind a rock, and wait till the fire was heaviest, an' thin stand up an' fire man-height clear. He wud lie out in camp too at night, snipin' at the shadows, for he never tuk a mouthful av slape. My commandin' orf'cer—save his little soul!—cud not see the beauty av my strategims, an' whin the Ould Rig'mint crossed us, an' that was wanst a week, he'd throt off to Crook, wid his big blue eyes as round as saucers, an' lay an information against me. I heard thim wanst talkin' through the tent-wall, an' I nearly laughed.

“He runs—runs like a hare,” sez the little orf'cer bhoy. “'Tis demoralisin' my men.”

“Ye damned little fool,” sez Crook, laughin', “he's larnin' you your business. Have ye been rushed at night yet?”

“No,” sez that child; wishful he had been.

“Have you any wounded?” sez Crook.

“No,” he sez. “There was no chanst for that. They follow Mulvaney too quick,” he sez.

“Fwhat more do you want, thin?” sez Crook.

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“Terence is bloodin’ you neat an’ handy,” he sez. “He knows fwhat you do not, an’ that’s that there’s a time for ivrything. He’ll not lead you wrong,” he sez, “but I’d give a month’s pay to larn fwhat he thinks av you.”

‘That kept the babe quiet, but Love-o’-Women was pokin’ at me for ivrything I did, an’ specially my manœuvres.

“Mr. Mulvaney,” he sez wan evenin’, very contempshus, “you’re growin’ very jeldy on your feet. Among gentlemen,” he sez, “among gentlemen that’s called no pretty name.”

“Among privits ’tis different,” I sez. “Get back to your tent. I’m sergeant here,” I sez.

‘There was just enough in the voice av me to tell him he was playin’ wid his life betune his teeth. He wint off, an’ I noticed that this man that was contempshus set off from the halt wid a shunt as tho’ he was bein’ kicked behind. That same night there was a Paythan picnic in the hills about, an’ firin’ into our tents fit to wake the livin’ dead. “Lie down all,” I sez. “Lie down an’ kape still. They’ll no more than waste ammunition.”

‘I heard a man’s feet on the ground, an’ thin a ’Tini joinin’ in the chorus. I’d been lyin’ warm, thinkin’ av Dinah an’ all, but I crup out wid the bugle for to look round in case there was a rush; an’ the ’Tini was flashin’ at the fore-ind av the camp, an’ the hill near by was fair flickerin’ wid long-range fire. Undher the starlight I behild Love-o’-Women settin’ on a rock wid his belt and helmet off. He shouted wanst or twice, an’ thin I heard him say: “They shud ha’ got the range long ago. Maybe they’ll fire at the flash.” Thin he fired again, an’ that dhrew a fresh volley, and the long slugs that

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they chew in their teeth came floppin' among the rocks like tree-toads av a hot night. "That's better," sez Love-o'-Women. "Oh Lord, how long, how long!" he sez, an' at that he lit a match an' held ut above his head.

"Mad," thinks I, "mad as a coot," an' I tuk wan stip forward, an' the nixt I knew was the sole av my boot flappin' like a cavalry gydon an' the funny-bone av my toes tinglin'. 'Twas a clane-cut shot—a slug—that niver touched sock or hide, but set me barefut on the rocks. At that I tuk Love'-o-Women by the scruff an' threw him under a bowlder, an' whin I sat down I heard the bullets patterin' on that same good stone.

"Ye may dhraw your own wicked fire," I sez, shakin' him, "but I'm not goin' to be kilt too."

"Ye've come too soon," he sez. "Ye've come too soon. In another minute they cudn't ha' missed me. Mother av God," he sez, "fwhy did ye not lave me be? Now 'tis all to do again," an' he hides his face in his hands.

"So that's it," I sez, shakin' him again. "That's the manin' av your disobeyin' ordhers."

"I dare not kill meself," he sez, rockin' to and fro. "My own hand wud not let me die, and there's not a bullet this month past wud touch me. I'm to die slow," he sez. "I'm to die slow. But I'm in hell now," he sez, shriekin' like a woman. "I'm in hell now!"

"God be good to us all," I sez, for I saw his face. "Will ye tell a man the throuble? If 'tis not murder, maybe we'll mend it yet."

'At that he laughed. "D'you remember fwhat I said in the Tyrone barricks about comin' to you for ghostly consolation? I have not forgot," he sez. "That came

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back, and the rest av my time is on me now, Terence. I’ve fought ut off for months an’ months, but the liquor will not bite any more. Terence,” he sez, “I can’t get dhrunk!”

‘Thin I knew he spoke the truth about bein’ in hell, for whin liquor does not take hould the sowl av a man is rotten in him. But me bein’ such as I was, fwhat could I say to him?

‘“Di’monds an’ pearls,” he begins again. “Di’monds an’ pearls I have thrown away wid both hands—an’ fwhat have I left? Oh, fwhat have I left?”

‘He was shakin’ an’ tremblin’ up against my shoul-
dher, an’ the slugs were singin’ overhead, an’ I was won-
derin’ whether my little bhoy wud have sinse enough to
kape his men quiet through all this firin’.

‘“So long as I did not think,” sez Love-o’-Women,
“so long I did not see—I wud not see, but I can now,
what I’ve lost. The time an’ the place,” he sez, “an’
the very words I said whin ut pleased me to go off alone
to hell. But thin, even thin,” he sez, wrigglin’ tremen-
jous, “I wud not ha’ been happy. There was too much
behind av me. How cud I ha’ believed her sworn oath
—me that have bruk mine again an’ again for the sport
av seein’ thim cry? An’ there are the others,” he sez.
“Oh, what will I do—what will I do?” He rocked back
an’ forward again, an’ I think he was cryin’ like wan av
the women he talked av.

‘The full half of fwhat he said was Brigade Ordhers to
me, but from the rest an’ the remnint I suspicioned some-
thin’ av his throuble. ’Twas the judgmint av God had
grup the heel av him, as I tould him ’twould in the
Tyrone barricks. The slugs was singin’ over our rock
more an’ more, an’ I sez for to divart him: “Let bad

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alone," I sez. "They'll be tryin' to rush the camp in a minut'."

'I had no more than said that whin a Paythan man c'rep' up on his belly wid his knife betune his teeth, not twinty yards from us. Love-o'-Women jumped up an' fetched a yell, an' the man saw him an' ran at him (he'd left his rifle under the rock) wid the knife. Love-o'-Women niver turned a hair, but by the Living Power, for I saw ut, a stone twisted under the Paythan man's feet an' he came down full sprawl, an' his knife wint tinkling acrost the rocks! "I tould you I was Cain," sez Love-o'-Women. "Fwhat's the use av killin' him? He's an honust man—by compare."

'I was not dishputin' about the morils av Paythans that tide, so I dhropped Love-o'-Women's butt acrost the man's face, an' "Hurry into camp," I sez, "for this may be the first av a rush."

'There was no rush after all, though we waited undher arms to give them a chanst. The Paythan man must ha' come alone for the mischief, an' afther a while Love-o'-Women wint back to his tint wid that quare lurchin' sind-off in his walk that I cud niver understand. Begad, I pitied him, an' the more bekaze he made me think for the rest av the night av the day whin I was confirmed Corp'ril, not actin' Lef'tinant, an' my thoughts was not good to me.

'Ye can ondersthand that afther that night we came to talkin' a dale together, an' bit by bit ut came out fwhat I'd suspicioned. The whole av his carr'in's on an' divilments had come back on him hard, as liquor comes back whin you've been on the dhrink for a wake. All he'd said an' all he'd done, an' only he cud tell how much that was, come back, and there was niver a minut's peace

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in his sowl. ’Twas the Horrors widout any cause to see, an’ yet, an’ yet—fwhat am I talkin’ av? He’d ha’ taken the Horrors wid thankfulness. Beyon’ the repentince av the man, an’ that was beyon’ the nature av man—awful, awful, to behould!—there was more that was worst than any repentince. Av the scores an’ scores that he called over in his mind (an’ they were drivin’ him mad), there was, mark you, wan woman av all, an’ she was not his wife, that cut him to the quick av his marrow. ’Twas there he said that he’d thrown away di’monds an’ pearls past count, an’ thin he’d begin again like a blind byle in an oil-mill, walkin’ round and round, to considher (him that was beyond all touch av bein’ happy this side hell!) how happy he wud ha’ been wid her. The more he considhered, the more he’d consate himself that he’d lost mighty happiness, an’ thin he wud work ut all backwards, an’ cry that he niver cud ha’ been happy anyway.

‘Time an’ time an’ again in camp, on p’rade, ay, an’ in action, I’ve seen that man shut his eyes an’ duck his head as ye wud duck to the flicker av a bay’nit. For ’twas thin, he tould me, that the thought av all he’d missed came an’ stud forninst him like red-hot irons. For what he’d done wid the others he was sorry, but he did not care; but this wan woman that I’ve tould of, by the Hilts av God, she made him pay for all the others twice over! Niver did I know that a man cud enjure such tormint widout his heart crackin’ in his ribs, an’ I have been’—Terence turned the pipe-stem slowly between his teeth—‘I have been in some black cells. All I iver suffered tho’ was not to be talked of alongside av him . . . an’ what could I do? Paternosters was no more than peas on plates for his sorrows.

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‘Evenshually we finished our prom’nade acrost the hills, and, thanks to me for the same, there was no casualties an’ no glory. The campaign was comin’ to an ind, an’ all the rig’mints was being drawn together for to be sint back home. Love-o’-Women was mighty sorry bekaze he had no work to do, an’ all his time to think in. I’ve heard that man talkin’ to his belt-plate an’ his side-arms while he was soldierin’ thim, all to prevent himself from thinkin’, an’ ivry time he got up afther he had been settin’ down or wint on from the halt, he’d start wid that kick an’ traverse that I tould you of—his legs sprawlin’ all ways to wanst. He wud niver go see the docthor, tho’ I tould him to be wise. He’d curse me up an’ down for my advice; but I knew he was no more a man to be reckoned wid than the little bhoy was a commandin’ orf’cer, so I let his tongue run if it aised him.

‘Wan day—’twas on the way back—I was walkin’ round camp wid him, an’ he stopped an’ struck ground wid his right fut three or four times doubtful. “Fwhat is ut?” I sez. “Is that ground?” sez he; an’ while I was thinkin’ his mind was goin’, up comes the docthor, who’d been anatomisin’ a dead bullock. Love-o’-Women starts to go on quick, an’ lands me a kick on the knee while his legs was gettin’ into marchin’ ordher.

“‘Hould on there,” sez the docthor; an’ Love-o’-Women’s face, that was lined like a gridiron, turns red as brick.

““’Tention,” says the docthor; an’ Love-o’-Women stud so. “Now shut your eyes,” sez the docthor. “No, ye must not hould by your comrade.”

““’Tis all up,” sez Love-o’-Women, thrying to smile. “I’d fall, docthor, an’ you know ut.”

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“Fall?” I sez. “Fall at attention wid your eyes shut! Fwhat do you mane?”

“The docthor knows,” he sez. “I’ve hild up as long as I can, but begad I’m glad ’tis all done. But I will die slow,” he sez, “I will die very slow.”

‘I cud see by the docthor’s face that he was mortal sorry for the man, an’ he ordered him to hospital. We wint back together, an’ I was dumb-struck. Love-o’-Women was cripplin’ and crumblin’ at ivry step. He walked wid a hand on my shoulder all slued sideways, an’ his right leg swingin’ like a lame camel. Me not knowin’ more than the dead fwhat ailed him, ’twas just as though the docthor’s word had done ut all—as if Love-o’-Women had but been waitin’ for the word to let go.

‘In hospital he sez somethin’ to the docthor that I could not catch.

“Holy Shmoke!” sez the docthor, “an’ who are you to be givin’ names to your diseases? ’Tis agin all the reg’lations.”

“I’ll not be a privit much longer,” sez Love-o’-Women in his gentleman’s voice, an’ the docthor jumped.

“Thrate me as a study, Doctor Lowndes,” he sez; an’ that was the first time I’d iver heard a docthor called his name.

“Good-bye, Terence,” sez Love-o’-Women. “’Tis a dead man I am widout the pleasure av dyin’. You’ll come an’ set wid me sometimes for the peace av my sowl.”

‘Now I had been minded for to ask Crook to take me back to the Ould Rig’mint; the fightin’ was over, an’ I was wore out wid the ways av the bhoys in the Tyrone; but I shifted my will, an’ hild on, and wint to set wid Love-o’-Women in the hospital. As I have said, sorr,

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the man bruk all to little pieces under my hand. How long he had hild up an' forced himself fit to march I cannot tell, but in hospital but two days later he was such as I hardly knew. I shuk hands wid him, an' his grip was fair strong, but his hands wint all ways to wanst, an' he cud not button his tunic.

“I'll take long an' long to die yet,” he sez, “for the wages av sin they're like interest in the rig'mintal savin's bank—sure, but a damned long time bein' paid.”

The docthor sez to me, quiet one day, “Has Tighe there anythin' on his mind?” he sez. “He's burnin' himself out.”

“How shud I know, sorr?” I sez, as innocent as putty.

“They call him Love-o'-Women in the Tyrone, do they not?” he sez. “I was a fool to ask. Be wid him all you can. He's houldin' on to your strength.”

“But fwhat ails him, docthor?” I sez.

“They call ut Locomotus attacks-us,” he sez, “be-kaze,” sez he, “ut attacks us like a locomotive, if ye know fwhat that manes. An' ut comes,” sez he, lookin' at me, “ut comes from bein' called Love-o'-Women.”

“You're jokin', docthor,” I sez.

“Jokin'!” sez he. “If iver you feel that you've got a felt sole in your boot instid av a Government bull's-wool, come to me,” he sez, “an' I'll show you whether 'tis a joke.”

You would not belave ut, sorr, but that, an' seein' Love-o'-Women overtuk widout warnin', put the cowl'd fear av Attacks-us on me so strong that for a week an' more I was kickin' my toes against stones an' stumps for the pleasure av feelin' thim hurt.

“An' Love-o'-Women lay in the cot (he might have

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gone down wid the wounded before an’ before, but he asked to stay wid me), and fwhat there was in his mind had full swing at him night an’ day an’ ivry hour av the day an’ the night, and he shrivelled like beef-rations in a hot sun, an’ his eyes was like owls’ eyes, an’ his hands was mut’nous.

‘They was gettin’ the rig’mints away wan by wan, the campaign bein’ inded, but as ushuil they was behavin’ as if niver a rig’mint had been moved before in the mem’ry av man. Now, fwhy is that, sorr? There’s fightin’, in an’ out, nine months av the twelve somewhere in the army. There has been—for years an’ years an’ years; an’ I wud ha’ thought they’d begin to get the hang av providin’ for throops. But no! Ivry time ’tis like a girls’ school meetin’ a big red bull whin they’re goin’ to chūrch; an’ “Mother av God,” sez the Commissariat an’ the Railways an’ the Barrick-masters, “fwhat will we do now?” The ordhers came to us av the Tyrone an’ the Ould Rig’mint an’ half a dozen more to go down, an’ there the ordhers stopped dumb. We went down, by the special grace av God—down the Khaiber anyways. There was sick wid us, an’ I’m thinkin’ that some av thim was jolted to death in the doolies, but they was anxious to be kilt so if they cud get to Peshawur alive the sooner. I walked by Love-o’-Women—there was no marchin’, an’ Love-o’-Women was not in a stew to get on. “If I’d only ha’ died up there,” sez he through the dooli-curtains, an’ thin he’d twist up his eyes an’ duck his head for the thoughts that come an’ raked him.

‘Dinah was in Depot at Pindi, but I wint circum-spectuous, for well I knew ’tis just at the rump-ind av all things that his luck turns on a man. By token I had seen a dhriver of a batthery goin’ by at a trot singin’

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“Home, swate home” at the top av his shout, and takin’ no heed to his bridle-hand—I had seen that man dhrup under the gun in the middle of a word, and come out by the limber like—like a frog on a pave-stone. No. I wud not hurry, though, God knows, my heart was all in Pindi. Love-o’-Women saw fwhat was in my mind, an’ “Go on, Terence,” he sez, “I know fwhat’s waitin’ for you.” “I will not,” I sez. “’Twill kape a little yet.”

‘Ye know the turn of the pass forninst Jumrood and the nine-mile road on the flat to Peshawur? All Peshawur was along that road day and night waitin’ for frinds—men, women, childer, and bands. Some av the throops was camped round Jumrood, an’ some wint on to Peshawur to get away down to their cantonmints. We came through in the early mornin’, havin’ been awake the night through, and we dhruv sheer into the middle av the mess. Mother av Glory, will I iver forget that comin’ back? The light was not fair lifted, and the first we heard was “For ’tis my delight av a shiny night,” frum a band that thought we was the second four comp’nies av the Lincolnshire. At that we was forced to sind them a yell to say who we was, an’ thin up wint “The wearin’ av the Green.” It made me crawl all up my backbone, not havin’ taken my brequist. Then right smash into our rear came fwhat was left av the Jock Elliotts—wid four pipers an’ not half a kilt among thim, playin’ for the dear life, an’ swingin’ their rumps like buck-rabbits, an’ a native rig’mint shriekin’ blue murther. Ye niver heard the like! There was men cryin’ like women that did—an’ faith I do not blame them! Fwhat bruk me down was the Lancers’ Band—shinin’ an’ spick like angils, wid the ould dhrum-horse

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at the head an’ the silver kettle-dhrums an’ all an’ all, waitin’ for their men that was behind us. They shtruck up the Cavalry Canter; an’ begad those poor ghosts that had not a sound fut in a throop they answered to ut; the men rockin’ in their saddles. We thried to cheer them as they wint by, but ut came out like a big gruntin’ cough, so there must have been many that was feelin’ like me. Oh, but I’m forgettin’! The Fly-by-Nights was waitin’ for their second battalion, an’ whin ut came out, there was the Colonel’s horse led at the head—saddle-empty. The men fair worshipped him, an’ he’d died at Ali Musjid on the road down. They waited till the remnint av the battalion was up, and thin—clane against ordhers, for who wanted that chune that day?—they wint back to Peshawur slow-time an’ tearin’ the bowils out av ivry man that heard, wid “The Dead March.” Right acrost our line they wint, an’ ye know their uniforms are as black as the Sweeps, crawlin’ past like the dead, an’ the other bands damnin’ them to let be.

‘Little they cared. The carpsie was wid them, an’ they’d ha’ taken ut so through a Coronation. Our ordhers was to go into Peshawur, an’ we wint hot-fut past the Fly-by-Nights, not singin’, to lave that chune behind us. That was how we tuk the road of the other corps.

‘ ’Twas ringin’ in my ears still whin I felt in the bones of me that Dinah was comin’, an’ I heard a shout, an’ thin I saw a horse an’ a tattoo latherin’ down the road, hell-to-shplit, under women. I knew—I knew! Wan was the Tyrone Colonel’s wife—ould Beeker’s lady—her gray hair flyin’ an’ her fat round carkiss rowlin’ in the saddle, an’ the other was Dinah, that shud ha’ been

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at Pindi. The Colonel's lady she charged the head av our column like a stone wall, an' she all but knocked Beeker off his horse, throwin' her arms round his neck an' blubberin', "Me bhoy! me bhoy!" an' Dinah wheeled left an' came down our flank, an' I let a yell that had suffered inside av me for months and—Dinah came! Will I iver forget that while I live! She'd come on pass from Pindi, an' the Colonel's lady had lint her the tattoo. They'd been huggin' an' cryin' in each other's arms all the long night.

'So she walked along wid her hand in mine, asking forty questions to wanst, an' beggin' me on the Virgin to make oath that there was not a bullet consaled in me, unbeknownst somewhere, an' thin I remembered Love-o'-Women. He was watchin' us, an' his face was like the face av a divil that has been cooked too long. I did not wish Dinah to see ut, for whin a woman's runnin' over with happiness she's like to be touched, for harm afterwards, by the laste little thing in life. So I dhrew the curtain, an' Love-o'-Women lay back and groaned.

'Whin we marched into Peshawur Dinah wint to barracks to wait for me, an', me feelin' so rich that tide, I wint on to take Love-o'-Women to hospital. It was the last I cud do, an' to save him the dust an' the smother I turned the dooli-men down a road well clear av the rest av the throops, an' we wint along, me talkin' through the curtains. Av a sudden I heard him say:

' "Let me look. For the mercy av Hiven, let me look." I had been so tuk up wid gettin' him out av the dust an' thinkin' av Dinah that I had not kept my eyes about me. There was a woman ridin' a little behind av us; an', talkin' ut over wid Dinah aftherwards, that same woman must ha' rid out far on the Jumrood road. Di-

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nah said that she had been hoverin’ like a kite on the left flank av the columns.

‘I halted the dooli to set the curtains, an’ she rode by, walkin’ pace, an Love-o’-Women’s eyes wint afther her as if he wud fair haul her down from the saddle.

“‘Follow there,” was all he sez, but I niver heard a man speak in that voice before or since; an’ I knew by those two wan words an’ the look in his face that she was Di’monds-an’-Pearls that he’d talked av in his disthresses.

‘We followed till she turned into the gate av a little house that stud near the Edwardes Gate. There was two girls in the veranda, an’ they ran in whin they saw us. Faith, at long eye-range it did not take me a wink to see fwhat kind av house ut was. The throops bein’ there an’ all, there was three or four such; but aftherwards the polis bade thim go. At the veranda Love-o’-Women sez, catchin’ his breath, “Stop here,” an’ thin, an’ thin, wid a grunt that must ha’ tore the heart up from his stummick, he swung himself out av the dooli, an’ my troth he stud up on his feet wid the sweat pourin’ down his face! If Mackie was to walk in here now I’d be less tuk back than I was thin. Where he’d dhrawn his power from, God knows—or the Divil—but ’twas a dead man walkin’ in the sun, wid the face av a dead man and the breath av a dead man, hild up by the Power, an’ the legs an’ the arms av the carpse obeyin’ ordhers.

‘The woman stud in the veranda. She’d been a beauty too, though her eyes was sunk in her head, an’ she looked Love-o’-Women up an’ down terrible. “An’,” she sez, kicking back the tail av her habit,—“An’,” she sez, “fwhat are you doin’ here, married man?”

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'Love-o'-Women said nothin', but a little froth came to his lips, an' he wiped ut off wid his hand an' looked at her an' the paint on her, an' looked, an' looked, an' looked.

"'An' yet," she sez, wid a laugh. (Did you hear Raines's wife laugh whin Mackie died? Ye did not? Well for you.) "'An' yet," she sez, "who but you have bettther right," sez she. "You taught me the road. You showed me the way," she sez. "Ay, look," she sez, "for 'tis your work; you that tould me—d' you remimber it?—that a woman who was false to wan man cud be false to two. I have been that," she sez, "that an' more, for you always said I was a quick learner, Ellis. Look well," she sez, "for it is me that you called your wife in the sight av God long since." An' she laughed.

'Love-o'-Women stud still in the sun widout answerin'. Thin he groaned an coughed to wanst, an' I thought 'twas the death-rattle, but he niver tuk his eyes off her face, not for a blink. Ye cud ha' put her eyelashes through the flies av an E. P. tent, they were so long.

"'Fwhat do you do here?" she sez, word by word, "that have taken away my joy in my man this five years gone—that have broken my rest an' killed my body an' damned my soul for the sake av seein' how 'twas done. Did your expayrience aftherwards bring you acrost any woman that give you more than I did? Wud I not ha' died for you, an' wid you, Ellis? Ye know that, man! If iver your lyin' sowl saw truth in uts life ye know that."

'An' Love-o'-Women lifted up his head and said, "I knew," an' that was all. While she was spakin' the Power hild him up parade-set in the sun, an' the sweat dhripped undher his helmet. 'Twas more an' more

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throuble for him to talk, an’ his mouth was running twistways.

“‘Fwhat do you do here?’” she sez, an’ her voice wint up. ’Twas like bells tollin’ before. “Time was whin you were quick enough wid your words,—you that talked me down to hell. Are ye dumb now?” An’ Love-o’-Women got his tongue, an’ sez simple, like a little child, “May I come in?” he sez.

““The house is open day an’ night,” she sez, wid a laugh; an’ Love-o’-Women ducked his head an’ hild up his hand as tho’ he was gyardin’. The Power was on him still—it hild him up still, for, by my sowl, as I’ll never save ut, he walked up the veranda steps that had been a livin’ corpse in hospital for a month!

““An’ now?” she sez, lookin’ at him; an’ the red paint stud lone on the white av her face like a bull’s-eye on a target.

‘He lifted up his eyes, slow an’ very slow, an’ he looked at her long an’ very long, an’ he tuk his spache betune his teeth wid a wrench that shuk him.

““I’m dyin’, Agypt—dyin’,” he sez. Ay, those were his words, for I remimber the name he called her. He was turnin’ the death-colour, but his eyes niver rowled. They were set—set on her. Widout word or warnin’ she opened her arms full stretch, an’ “Here!” she sez. (Oh, fwhat a golden mericle av a voice ut was!) “Die here!” she sez; an’ Love-o’-Women dhropped forward, an’ she hild him up, for she was a fine big woman.

‘I had no time to turn, bekaze that minut I heard the sowl quit him—tore out in the death-rattle—an’ she laid him back in a long chair, an’ she sez to me, “Mis-ther soldier,” she sez, “will ye not wait an’ talk to wan av the girls? This sun’s too much for him.”

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‘Well I knew there was no sun he’d iver see, but I cud not spake, so I wint away wid the empty dooli to find the docthor. He’d been breakfastin’ an’ lunchin’ iver since we’d come in, an’ he was full as a tick.

“Faith, ye’ve got dhrunk mighty soon,” he sez, when I’d tould him, “to see that man walk. Barrin’ a puff or two av life, he was a carps before we left Jumrood. I’ve a great mind,” he sez, “to confine you.”

“There’s a dale av liquor runnin’ about, docthor,” I sez, solemn as a hard-boiled egg. “Maybe ’tis so; but will ye not come an’ see the carps at the house?”

“’Tis dishgraceful,” he sez, “that I would be expected to go to a place like that. Was she a pretty woman?” he sez, an’ at that he set off double-quick.

‘I cud see that the two was in the veranda where I’d left them, an’ I knew by the hang av her head an’ the noise av the crows fwhat had happened. ’Twas the first and the last time that I’d iver known woman to use the pistol. They fear the shot as a rule, but Di’monds-an’-Pearls she did not—she did not.

‘The docthor touched the long black hair av her head (’twas all loose upon Love-o’-Women’s tunic), an’ that cleared the liquor out av him. He stud considherin’ a long time, his hands in his pockets, an’ at last he sez to me, “Here’s a double death from naturil causes, most naturil causes; an’ in the present state av affairs the rig’-mint will be thankful for wan grave the less to dig. Issiwasti,” he sez. “Issiwasti, Privit Mulvaney, these two will be buried together in the Civil Cemet’ry at my expinse; an’ may the good God,” he sez, “make it so much for me whin my time comes. Go you to your wife,” he sez. “Go an’ be happy. I’ll see to this all.”

‘I left him still considherin’. They was buried in the

‘LOVE-O’-WOMEN’

Civil Cemet’ry together, wid a Church av England service. There was too many buryin’s thin to ask questions, an’ the docthor—he ran away wid Major—Major Van Dyce’s lady that year—he saw to ut all. Fwhat the right an’ the wrong av Love-o’-Women an’ Di’monds-an’-Pearls was I niver knew, an’ I will niver know; but I’ve tould ut as I came acrost ut—here an’ there in little pieces. So, being fwhat I am, an’ knowin’ fwhat I knew, that’s fwhy I say in this shootin’-case here, Mackie that’s dead an’ in hell is the lucky man. There are times, sorr, whin’ tis bettther for the man to die than to live, an’ by consequence forty million times bettther for the woman.’

‘H’up there!’ said Ortheris. ‘It’s time to go.’

The witnesses and guard formed up in the thick white dust of the parched twilight and swung off, marching easy and whistling. Down the road to the green by the church I could hear Ortheris, the black Book-lie still uncleansed on his lips, setting, with a fine sense of the fitness of things, the shrill quickstep that runs—

‘Oh, do not despise the advice of the wise,
Learn wisdom from those that are older,
And don’t try for things that are out of your reach—
An’ that’s what the Girl told the Soldier!
Soldier! soldier!
Oh, that’s what the Girl told the Soldier!’

THE RECORD OF BADALIA HERODSFOOT

(1890)

The year's at the spring
And day's at the dawn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in His heaven—
All's right with the world!

‘Pippa Passes.’

THIS is not that Badalia whose spare names were Joanna, Pugnacious, and M'Canna, as the song says, but another and a much nicer lady.

In the beginning of things she had been unregenerate; had worn the heavy fluffy fringe which is the ornament of the costermonger's girl, and there is a legend in Gunnison Street that on her wedding-day she, a flare-lamp in either hand, danced dances on a discarded lover's winkle-barrow, till a policeman interfered, and then Badalia danced with the Law amid shoutings. Those were her days of fatness, and they did not last long, for her husband after two years took to himself another woman, and passed out of Badalia's life, over Badalia's senseless body; for he stifled protest with blows. While

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she was enjoying her widowhood the baby that the husband had not taken away died of croup, and Badalia was altogether alone. With rare fidelity she listened to no proposals for a second marriage according to the customs of Gunnison Street, which do not differ from those of the Barralong. 'My man,' she explained to her suitors, 'e'll come back one o' these days, an' then, like as not, 'e'll take an' kill me if I was livin' 'long o' you. You don't know Tom; I do. Now you go. I can do for myself—not 'avin' a kid.' She did for herself with a mangle, some tending of babies, and an occasional sale of flowers. This latter trade is one that needs capital, and takes the vendor very far westward, insomuch that the return journey from, let us say, the Burlington Arcade to Gunnison Street, E., is an excuse for drink, and then, as Badalia pointed out, 'You come 'ome with your shawl arf off of your back, an' your bonnick under your arm, and the price of nothing-at-all in your pocket, let alone a slop takin' care o' you.' Badalia did not drink, but she knew her sisterhood, and gave them rude counsel. Otherwise she kept herself to herself, and meditated a great deal upon Tom Herodsfoot, her husband, who would come back some day, and the baby who would never return. In what manner these thoughts wrought upon her mind will not be known.

Her entry into society dates from the night when she rose literally under the feet of the Reverend Eustace Hanna, on the landing of No. 17 Gunnison Street, and told him that he was a fool without discernment in the dispensation of his district charities.

'You give Lascar Loo custids,' said she, without the formality of introduction; 'give her pork-wine. Garn! Give 'er blankits. Garn 'ome! 'Er mother, she eats

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'em all, and drinks the blankets. Gits 'em back from the shop, she does, before you come visiting again, so as to 'ave 'em all handy an' proper; an' Lascar Loo she sez to you, "Oh, my mother's that good to me!" she do. Lascar Loo 'ad better talk so, bein' sick abed, 'r else 'er mother would kill 'er. Garn! you're a bloomin' gardener—you an' yer custids! Lascar Loo don't never smell of 'em even.'

Thereon the curate, instead of being offended, recognised in the heavy eyes under the fringe the soul of a fellow-worker, and so bade Badalia mount guard over Lascar Loo, when the next jelly or custard should arrive, to see that the invalid actually ate it. This Badalia did, to the disgust of Lascar Loo's mother, and the sharing of a black eye between the three; but Lascar Loo got her custard, and coughing heartily, rather enjoyed the fray.

Later on, partly through the Reverend Eustace Hanna's swift recognition of her uses, and partly through certain tales poured out with moist eyes and flushed cheeks by Sister Eva, youngest and most impressionable of the Little Sisters of the Red Diamond, it came to pass that Badalia, arrogant, fluffy-fringed, and perfectly unlicensed in speech, won a recognised place among such as labour in Gunnison Street.

These were a mixed corps, zealous or hysterical, faint-hearted or only very wearied of battle against misery, according to their lights. The most part were consumed with small rivalries and personal jealousies, to be retailed confidentially to their own tiny cliques in the pauses between wrestling with death for the body of a moribund laundress, or scheming for further mission-grants to resole a consumptive compositor's very consumptive boots. There was a rector that lived in dread

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of pauperising the poor, would fain have held bazars for fresh altar-cloths, and prayed in secret for a large new brass bird, with eyes of red glass, fondly believed to be carbuncles. There was Brother Victor, of the Order of Little Ease, who knew a great deal about altar-cloths, but kept his knowledge in the background while he strove to propitiate Mrs. Jessel, the Secretary of the Tea Cup Board, who had money to dispense, but hated Rome—even though Rome would, on its honour, do no more than fill the stomach, leaving the dazed soul to the mercies of Mrs. Jessel. There were all the Little Sisters of the Red Diamond, daughters of the horseleech, crying ‘Give’ when their own charity was exhausted, and pitifully explaining to such as demanded an account of their disbursements in return for one half-sovereign, that relief-work in a bad district can hardly be systematised on the accounts side without expensive duplication of staff. There was the Reverend Eustace Hanna, who worked impartially with Ladies’ Committees, Androgynous Leagues and Guilds, Brother Victor, and anybody else who could give him money, boots, or blankets, or that more precious help that allows itself to be directed by those who know. And all these people learned, one by one, to consult Badalia on matters of personal character, right to relief, and hope of eventual reformation in Gunnison Street. Her answers were seldom cheering, but she possessed special knowledge and complete confidence in herself.

‘I’m Gunnison Street,’ she said to the austere Mrs. Jessel. ‘I know what’s what, I do, an’ they don’t want your religion, Mum, not a single—. Excuse me. It’s all right when they comes to die, Mum, but till they die what they wants is things to eat. The men they’ll shif’

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for themselves. That's why Nick Lapworth sez to you that 'e wants to be confirmed an' all that. 'E won't never lead no new life, nor 'is wife won't get no good out o' all the money you gives 'im. No more you can't pauperise them as 'asn't things to begin with. They're bloomin' well pauped. The women they can't shif' f'or themselves—'specially bein' always confined. 'Ow should they? They wants things if they can get 'em anyways. If not they dies, and a good job too, for women is cruel put upon in Gunnison Street.'

'Do you believe that—that Mrs. Herodsfoot is altogether a proper person to trust funds to?' said Mrs. Jessel to the curate after this conversation. 'She seems to be utterly godless in her speech at least.'

The curate agreed. She was godless according to Mrs. Jessel's views, but did not Mrs. Jessel think that since Badalia knew Gunnison Street and its needs, as none other knew it, she might in a humble way be, as it were, the scullion of charity from purer sources, and that if, say, the Tea Cup Board could give a few shillings a week, and the Little Sisters of the Red Diamond a few more, and, yes, he himself could raise yet a few more, the total, not at all likely to be excessive, might be handed over to Badalia to dispense among her associates. Thus Mrs. Jessel herself would be set free to attend more directly to the spiritual wants of certain large-limbed hulking men who sat picturesquely on the lower benches of her gatherings and sought for truth—which is quite as precious as silver, when you know the market for it.

'She'll favour her own friends,' said Mrs. Jessel. The curate refrained from mirth, and, after wise flattery, carried his point. To her unbounded pride Badalia was

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appointed the dispenser of a grant—a weekly trust, to be held for the benefit of Gunnison Street.

‘I don’t know what we can get together each week,’ said the curate to her. ‘But here are seventeen shillings to start with. You do what you like with them among your people, only let me know how it goes so that we shan’t get muddled in the accounts. D’you see?’

‘Ho yuss! ’Tain’t much though, is it?’ said Badalia, regarding the white coins in her palm. The sacred fever of the administrator, only known to those who have tasted power, burned in her veins. ‘Boots is boots, unless they’re give you, an’ then they ain’t fit to wear unless they’re mended top an’ bottom; an’ jellies is jellies; an’ I don’t think anything o’ that cheap pork-wine, but it all comes to something. It’ll go quicker ’n a quartern of gin—seventeen bob. An’ I’ll keep a book—same as I used to do before Tom went an’ took up ’long o’ that pan-faced slut in Hennessy’s Rents. We was the only barrer that kep’ regular books, me an’—’im.’

She bought a large copy-book—her unschooled handwriting demanded room—and in it she wrote the story of her war; boldly, as befits a general, and for no other eyes than her own and those of the Reverend Eustace Hanna. Long ere the pages were full the mottled cover had been soaked in kerosene—Lascar Loo’s mother, defrauded of her percentage on her daughter’s custards, invaded Badalia’s room in 17 Gunnison Street, and fought with her to the damage of the lamp and her own hair. It was hard, too, to carry the precious ‘pork-wine’ in one hand and the book in the other through an eternally thirsty land; so red stains were added to those of the oil. But the Reverend Eustace Hanna, looking at the matter of the book, never objected. The generous

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scrawls told their own tale, Badalia every Saturday night supplying the chorus between the written statements thus:—

‘Mrs. Hikkey, very ill brandy 3d. Cab for hospital, she had to go, 1s. Mrs. Poone confined. In money for tea (she took it I know, sir) 6d. Met her husband out looking for work.’

‘I slapped ’is face for a bone-idle beggar! ’E won’t get no work becos ’e’s—excuse me, sir. Won’t you go on?’ The curate continued—

‘Mrs. Vincent. Confid. No linning for baby. Most untidy. In money 2s. 6d. Some cloths from Miss Evva.’

‘Did Sister Eva do that?’ said the curate very softly. Now charity was Sister Eva’s bounden duty, yet to one man’s eyes each act of her daily toil was a manifestation of angelic grace and goodness—a thing to perpetually admire.

‘Yes, sir. She went back to the Sisters’ ’Ome an’ took ’em off ’er own bed. Most beautiful marked too. Go on, sir. That makes up four and thruppence.’

‘Mrs. Junnet to keep good fire coals is up. 7d.

‘Mrs. Lockhart took a baby to nurse to earn a trifle but mother can’d pay husband summons over and over. He won’t help. Cash 2s. 2d. Worked in a ketchin but had to leave. Fire, tea, and shin of beef 1s. 7½d.’

‘There was a fight there, sir,’ said Badalia. ‘Not me, sir. ’Er ’usband, o’ course ’e come in at the wrong time, was wishful to ’ave the beef, so I calls up the next floor an’ down comes that mulatter man wot sells the sword-stick canes, top o’ Ludgate-’ill. “Muley,” sez I, “you big black beast, you, take an’ kill this big white beast ’ere.” I knew I couldn’t stop Tom Lockart ’alf

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drunk, with the beef in 'is 'ands. "I'll beef 'm," sez Muley, an' 'e did it, with that pore woman a-cryin' in the next room, an' the top banisters on that landin' is broke out, but she got 'er beef-tea, an' Tom 'e's got 'is gruel. Will you go on, sir?'

'No, I think it will be all right. I'll sign for the week,' said the curate. One gets so used to these things profanely called human documents.

'Mrs. Churner's baby's got diptheery,' said Badalia, turning to go.

'Where's that? The Churners of Painter's Alley, or the other Churners in Houghton Street?'

'Houghton Street. The Painter's Alley people, they're sold out an' left.'

'Sister Eva's sitting one night a week with old Mrs. Probyn in Houghton Street—isn't she?' said the curate uneasily.

'Yes; but she won't sit no longer. I've took up Mrs. Probyn. I can't talk 'er no religion, but she don't want it; an' Miss Eva she don't want no diptheery, tho' she says she does. Don't you be afraid for Miss Eva.'

'But—but you'll get it, perhaps.'

'Like as not.' She looked the curate between the eyes, and her own eyes flamed under the fringe. 'Maybe I'd like to get it, for aught you know.'

The curate thought upon these words for a little time till he began to think of Sister Eva in the gray cloak with the white bonnet ribbons under the chin. Then he thought no more of Badalia.

What Badalia thought was never expressed in words, but it is known in Gunnison Street that Lascar Loo's mother, sitting blind drunk on her own doorstep, was that night captured and wrapped up in the war-cloud of

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Badalia's wrath, so that she did not know whether she stood on her head or her heels, and after being soundly bumped on every particular stair up to her room, was set down on Badalia's bed, there to whimper and quiver till the dawn, protesting that all the world was against her, and calling on the names of children long since slain by dirt and neglect. Badalia, snorting, went out to war, and since the hosts of the enemy were many, found enough work to keep her busy till the dawn.

As she had promised, she took Mrs. Probyn into her own care, and began by nearly startling the old lady into a fit with the announcement that 'there ain't no God like as not, an' if there is it don't matter to you or me, an' any'ow you take this jelly.' Sister Eva objected to being shut off from her pious work in Houghton Street, but Badalia insisted, and by fair words and the promise of favours to come so prevailed on three or four of the more sober men of the neighbourhood, that they blockaded the door whenever Sister Eva attempted to force an entry, and pleaded the diphtheria as an excuse. 'I've got to keep 'er out 'o 'arm's way,' said Badalia, 'an' out she keeps. The curick won't care a—for me, but—he wouldn't any'ow.'

The effect of that quarantine was to shift the sphere of Sister Eva's activity to other streets, and notably those most haunted by the Reverend Eustace Hanna and Brother Victor, of the Order of Little Ease. There exists, for all their human bickerings, a very close brotherhood in the ranks of those whose work lies in Gunnison Street. To begin with, they have seen pain—pain that no word or deed of theirs can alleviate—life born into Death, and Death crowded down by unhappy life. Also they understand the full significance of drink, which

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is a knowledge hidden from very many well-meaning people, and some of them have fought with the beasts at Ephesus. They meet at unseemly hours in unseemly places, exchange a word or two of hasty counsel, advice, or suggestion, and pass on to their appointed toil, since time is precious and lives hang in the balance of five minutes. For many, the gas-lamps are their sun, and the Covent Garden wains the chariots of the twilight. They have all in their station begged for money, so that the freemasonry of the mendicant binds them together.

To all these influences there was added in the case of two workers that thing which men have agreed to call Love. The chance that Sister Eva might catch diphtheria did not enter into the curate's head till Badalia had spoken. Then it seemed a thing intolerable and monstrous that she should be exposed not only to this risk, but any accident whatever of the streets. A wain coming round a corner might kill her; the rotten stair-cases on which she trod daily and nightly might collapse and maim her; there was danger in the tottering coping-stones of certain crazy houses that he knew well; danger more deadly within those houses. What if one of a thousand drunken men crushed out that precious life? A woman had once flung a chair at the curate's head. Sister Eva's arm would not be strong enough to ward off a chair. There were also knives that were quick to fly. These and other considerations cast the soul of the Reverend Eustace Hanna into torment that no leaning upon Providence could relieve. God was indubitably great and terrible—one had only to walk through Gunnison Street to see that much—but it would be better, vastly better, that Eva should have the protection of his own arm. And the world that was not too busy to

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watch might have seen a woman, not too young, light-haired and light-eyed, slightly assertive in her speech, and very limited in such ideas as lay beyond the immediate sphere of her duty, where the eyes of the Reverend Eustace Hanna turned to follow the footsteps of a Queen crowned in a little gray bonnet with white ribbons under the chin.

If that bonnet appeared for a moment at the bottom of a courtyard, or nodded at him on a dark staircase, then there was hope yet for Lascar Loo, living on one lung and the memory of past excesses, hope even for whining sodden Nick Lapworth, blaspheming, in the hope of money, over the pangs of a 'true conversion this time, s'elp me Gawd, sir.' If that bonnet did not appear for a day, the mind of the curate was filled with lively pictures of horror, visions of stretchers, a crowd at some villainous crossing, and a policeman—he could see that policeman—jerking out over his shoulder the details of the accident, and ordering the man who would have set his body against the wheels—heavy dray wheels, he could see them—to 'move on.' Then there was less hope for the salvation of Gunnison Street and all in it.

This agony Brother Victor beheld one day when he was coming from a death-bed. He saw the light in the eye, the relaxing muscles of the mouth, and heard a new ring in the voice that had told flat all the forenoon. Sister Eva had turned into Gunnison Street after a forty-eight hours' eternity of absence. She had not been run over. Brother Victor's heart must have suffered in some human fashion, or he would never have seen what he saw. But the Law of his Church made suffering easy. His duty was to go on with his work until he died, even as Badalia went on. She, magnifying her office, faced

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the drunken husband; coaxed the doubly shiftless, thriftless girl-wife into a little forethought, and begged clothes when and where she could for the scrofulous babes that multiplied like the green scum on the untopped water-cisterns.

The story of her deeds was written in the book that the curate signed weekly, but she never told him any more of fights and tumults in the street. 'Mis' Eva does 'er work 'er way. I does mine mine. But I do more than Mis' Eva ten times over, an' "Thank yer, Badalia," sez 'e, "that'll do for this week." I wonder what Tom's doin' now long o' that—other woman. 'Seems like as if I'd go an' look at 'im one o' these days. But I'd cut 'er liver out—couldn't 'elp myself. Better not go, p'raps.'

Hennessy's Rents lay more than two miles from Gun-nison Street, and were inhabited by much the same class of people. Tom had established himself there with Jenny Wabstow, his new woman, and for weeks lived in great fear of Badalia's suddenly descending upon him. The prospect of actual fighting did not scare him; but he objected to the police-court that would follow, and the orders for maintenance and other devices of a law that cannot understand the simple rule that 'when a man's tired of a woman 'e ain't such a bloomin' fool as to live with 'er no more, an' that's the long an' short of it.' For some months his new wife wore very well, and kept Tom in a state of decent fear and consequent orderliness. Also work was plentiful. Then a baby was born, and, following the law of his kind, Tom, little interested in the children he helped to produce, sought distraction in drink. He had confined himself, as a rule, to beer, which is stupefying and comparatively innocu-

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ous: at least, it clogs the legs, and though the heart may ardently desire to kill, sleep comes swiftly, and the crime often remains undone. Spirits, being more volatile, allow both the flesh and the soul to work together—generally to the inconvenience of others. Tom discovered that there was merit in whisky—if you only took enough of it—cold. He took as much as he could purchase or get given him, and by the time that his woman was fit to go abroad again, the two rooms of their household were stripped of many valuable articles. Then the woman spoke her mind, not once, but several times, with point, fluency and metaphor; and Tom was indignant at being deprived of peace at the end of his day's work, which included much whisky. He therefore withdrew himself from the solace and companionship of Jenny Wabstow, and she therefore pursued him with more metaphors. At the last, Tom would turn round and hit her—sometimes across the head, and sometimes across the breast, and the bruises furnished material for discussion on doorsteps among such women as had been treated in like manner by their husbands. They were not few.

But no very public scandal had occurred till Tom one day saw fit to open negotiations with a young woman for matrimony according to the laws of free selection. He was getting very tired of Jenny, and the young woman was earning enough from flower-selling to keep him in comfort, whereas Jenny was expecting another baby, and most unreasonably expected consideration on this account. The shapelessness of her figure revolted him, and he said as much in the language of his breed. Jenny cried till Mrs. Hart, lineal descendant, and Irish of the 'mother to Mike of the donkey-cart,' stopped her on her

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own staircase and whispered: 'God be good to you, Jenny, my woman, for I see how 'tis with you.' Jenny wept more than ever, and gave Mrs. Hart a penny and some kisses, while Tom was conducting his own wooing at the corner of the street.

The young woman, prompted by pride, not by virtue, told Jenny of his offers, and Jenny spoke to Tom that night. The altercation began in their own rooms, but Tom tried to escape; and in the end all Hennessy's Rents gathered themselves upon the pavement and formed a court to which Jenny appealed from time to time, her hair loose on her neck, her raiment in extreme disorder, and her steps astray from drink. 'When your man drinks, you'd better drink too! It don't 'urt so much when 'e 'its you then,' says the Wisdom of the Women. And surely they ought to know.

'Look at 'im!' shrieked Jenny. 'Look at 'im, stand-in' there without any word to say for himself, that 'ud smitch off and leave me an' never so much as a shillin' lef' be'ind! You call yourself a man—you call yourself the bleedin' shadow of a man? I've seen better men than you made outer chewed paper and spat out arterwards. Look at 'im! 'E's been drunk since Thursday last, an' 'e'll be drunk s' long's 'e can get drink. 'E's took all I've got, an' me—an' me—as you see—'

A murmur of sympathy from the women.

'Took it all, he did, an' atop of his blasted pickin' an' stealin'—yes, you, you thief—'e goes off an' tries to take up long o' that'—here followed a complete and minute description of the young woman. Luckily, she was not on the spot to hear. ''E'll serve 'er as 'e served me! 'E'll drink every bloomin' copper she makes an' then leave 'er alone, same as 'e done me! O women, look

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you, I've bore 'im one an' there's another on the way, an' 'e'd up an' leave me as I am now—the stinkin' dorg. An' you may leave me. I don't want none o' your leavin's. Go away. Get away!' The hoarseness of passion overpowered the voice. The crowd attracted a policeman as Tom began to slink away.

'Look at 'im,' said Jenny, grateful for the new listener. 'Ain't there no law for such as 'im? 'E's took all my money, 'e's beat me once, twice an' over. 'E's swine drunk when 'e ain't mad drunk, an' now, an' now 'e's trying to pick up along o' another woman. 'Im I give up a four times better man for. Ain't there no law?'

'What's the matter now? You go into your 'ouse. I'll see to the man. 'As 'e been 'itting you?' said the policeman.

'Ittin' me? 'E's cut my 'eart in two, an' 'e stands there grinnin' as tho' 'twas all a play to 'im.'

'You go on into your 'ouse an' lie down a bit.'

'I'm a married woman, I tell you, an' I'll 'ave my 'usband!'

'I ain't done her no bloomin' 'arm,' said Tom from the edge of the crowd. He felt that public opinion was running against him.

'You ain't done me any bloomin' good, you dorg. I'm a married woman, I am, an' I won't 'ave my 'usband took from me.'

'Well, if you are a married woman, cover your breasts,' said the policeman soothingly. He was used to domestic brawls.

'Shan't—thank you for your impidence. Look 'ere!' She tore open her dishevelled bodice and showed such crescent-shaped bruises as are made by a well-applied chair-back. 'That's what 'e done to me acause my

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heart wouldn't break quick enough! 'E's tried to get in an' break it. Look at that, Tom, that you gave me last night; an' I made it up with you. But that was before I knew what you were tryin' to do long o' that woman—'

'D'you charge 'im?' said the policeman. 'E'll get a month for it, per'aps.'

'No,' said Jenny firmly. It was one thing to expose her man to the scorn of the street, and another to lead him to jail.

'Then you go in an' lie down, and you'—this to the crowd—'pass along the pavement, there. Pass along. 'Tain't nothing to laugh at.' To Tom, who was being sympathised with by his friends, 'It's good for you she didn't charge you, but mind this now, the next time,' etc.

Tom did not at all appreciate Jenny's forbearance, nor did his friends help to compose his mind. He had whacked the woman because she was a nuisance. For precisely the same reason he had cast about for a new mate. And all his kind acts had ended in a truly painful scene in the street, a most unjustifiable exposure by and of his woman, and a certain loss of caste—this he realised dimly—among his associates. Consequently, all women were nuisances, and consequently whisky was a good thing. His friends condoled with him. Perhaps he had been more hard on his woman than she deserved, but her disgraceful conduct under provocation excused all offence.

'I wouldn't 'ave no more to do with 'er—a woman like that there,' said one comforter.

'Let 'er go an' dig for her bloomin' self. A man wears 'isself out to 'is bones shovin' meat down their mouths,

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while they sit at 'ome easy all day; an' the very fust time, mark you, you 'as a bit of a difference, an' very proper too for a man as is a man, she ups an' 'as you out into the street, callin' you Gawd knows what all. What's the good o' that, I arx you?' So spoke the second comforter.

The whisky was the third, and his suggestion struck Tom as the best of all. He would return to Badalia, his wife. Probably she would have been doing something wrong while he had been away, and he could then vindicate his authority as a husband. Certainly she would have money. Single women always seemed to possess the pence that God and the Government denied to hard-working men. He refreshed himself with more whisky. It was beyond any doubt that Badalia would have done something wrong. She might even have married another man. He would wait till the new husband was out of the way, and, after kicking Badalia, would get money and a long absent sense of satisfaction. There is much virtue in a creed or a law, but when all is prayed and suffered, drink is the only thing that will make clean all a man's deeds in his own eyes. Pity it is that the effects are not permanent.

Tom parted with his friends, bidding them tell Jenny that he was going to Gunnison Street, and would return to her arms no more. Because this was the devil's message, they remembered and severally delivered it, with drunken distinctness, in Jenny's ears. Then Tom took more drink till his drunkenness rolled back and stood off from him as a wave rolls back and stands off the wreck it will swamp. He reached the traffic-polished black asphalte of a side-street and trod warily among the reflections of the shop-lamps that burned in gulfs of

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pitchy darkness, fathoms beneath his boot-heels. He was very sober indeed. Looking down his past, he beheld that he was justified of all his actions so entirely and perfectly that if Badalia had in his absence dared to lead a blameless life he would smash her for not having gone wrong.

Badalia at that moment was in her own room after the regular nightly skirmish with Lascar Loo's mother. To a reproof as stinging as a Gunnison Street tongue could make it, the old woman, detected for the hundredth time in the theft of the poor delicacies meant for the invalid, could only cackle and answer—

'D'you think Loo's never bilked a man in 'er life? She's dyin' now—on'y she's so cunning long about it. Me! I'll live for twenty years yet.'

Badalia shook her, more on principle than in any hope of curing her, and thrust her into the night, where she collapsed on the pavement and called upon the devil to slay Badalia.

He came upon the word in the shape of a man with a very pale face who asked for her by name. Lascar Loo's mother remembered. It was Badalia's husband—and the return of a husband to Gunnison Street was generally followed by beatings.

'Where's my wife?' said Tom. 'Where's my slut of a wife?'

'Upstairs an' be—to her,' said the old woman, falling over on her side. ''Ave you come back for 'er, Tom?'

'Yes. 'Oo's she took up while I bin gone?'

'All the bloomin' curicks in the parish. She's that set up you wouldn't know 'er.'

'Strewth she is!'

'Oh, yuss. Mor'n that, she's always round an' about

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with them sniffin' Sisters of Charity an' the curick. Mor'n that, 'e gives 'er money—pounds an' pounds a week. Been keepin' her that way for months, 'e 'as. No wonder you wouldn't 'ave nothin' to do with 'er when you left. An' she keeps me outer the food-stuff they gets for me lyin' dyin' out 'ere like a dorg. She's been a blazin' bad un has Badalia since you lef'.'

'Got the same room still, 'as she?' said Tom, striding over Lascar Loo's mother, who was picking at the chinks between the pave-stones.

'Yes, but so fine you wouldn't know it.'

Tom went up the stairs and the old lady chuckled. Tom was angry. Badalia would not be able to bump people for some time to come, or to interfere with the heaven-appointed distribution of custards.

Badalia, undressing to go to bed, heard feet on the stair that she knew well. Ere they stopped to kick at her door she had, in her own fashion, thought over very many things.

'Tom's back,' she said to herself. 'An' I'm glad . . . spite o' the curick an' everythink.'

She opened the door, crying his name.

The man pushed her aside.

'I don't want none o' your kissin's an' slaverin's. I'm sick of 'em,' said he.

'You ain't 'ad so many neither to make you sick these two years past.'

'I've 'ad better. Got any money?'

'On'y a little—orful little.'

'That's a—lie, an' you know it.'

''Taint—and, oh Tom, what's the use o' talkin' money the minute you come back? Didn't you like Jenny? I knowed you wouldn't.'

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'Shut your 'ead. Ain't you got enough to make a man drunk fair?'

'You don't want bein' made more drunk any. You're drunk a'ready. You come to bed, Tom.'

'To you?'

'Ay, to me. Ain't I nothin'—spite o' Jenny?'

She put out her arms as she spoke. But the drink held Tom fast.

'Not for me,' said he, steadying himself against the wall. 'Don't I know 'ow you've been goin' on while I was away, yah!'

'Arsk about!' said Badalia indignantly, drawing herself together. ''Oo sez anythink agin me 'ere?'

'Oo sez? W'y, everybody. I ain't come back more'n a minute fore I finds you've been with the curick Gawd knows where. Wot curick was 'e?'

'The curick that's 'ere always,' said Badalia hastily. She was thinking of anything rather than the Rev. Eustace Hanna at that moment. Tom sat down gravely in the only chair in the room. Badalia continued her arrangements for going to bed.

'Pretty thing that,' said Tom, 'to tell your own lawful married 'usband—an' I guv five bob for the weddin'-ring. Curick that's 'ere always! Cool as brass you are. Ain't you got no shame? Ain't 'e under the bed now?'

'Tom, you're bleedin' drunk. I ain't done nothin' to be 'shamed of.'

'You! You don't know wot shame is. But I ain't come 'ere to mess with you. Give me wot you've got, an' then I'll dress you down an' go to Jenny.'

'I ain't got nothin' 'cept some coppers an' a shillin' or so.'

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‘Wot’s that about the curick keepin’ you on five poun’ a week?’

‘’Oo told you that?’

‘Lascar Loo’s mother, lyin’ on the pavemint outside, an’ more honest than you’ll ever be. Give me wot you’ve got!’

Badalia passed over to a little shell pin-cushion on the mantelpiece, drew thence four shillings and threepence—the lawful earnings of her trade—and held them out to the man who was rocking in his chair and surveying the room with wide-opened, rolling eyes.

‘That ain’t five poun’,’ said he drowsily.

‘I ain’t got no more. Take it an’ go—if you won’t stay.’

Tom rose slowly, gripping the arms of the chair. ‘Wot about the curick’s money that ’e guv you?’ said he. ‘Lascar Loo’s mother told me. You give it over to me now, or I’ll make you.’

‘Lascar Loo’s mother don’t know anything about it.’

‘She do, an’ more than you want her to know.’

‘She don’t. I’ve bumped the ’eart out of ’er, and I can’t give you the money. Anythin’ else but that, Tom, an’ everythin’ else but that, Tom, I’ll give willin’ and true. ’Taint my money. Won’t the doliar be enough? That money’s my trust. There’s a book along of it too.’

‘Your trust? Wot are you doin’ with any trust that your ’usband don’t know of? You an’ your trust! Take you that!’

Tom stepped towards her and delivered a blow of the clenched fist across the mouth. ‘Give me wot you’ve got,’ said he, in the thick, abstracted voice of one talking in dreams.

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‘I won’t,’ said Badalia, staggering to the wasbstand. With any other man than her husband she would have fought savagely as a wild cat; but Tom had been absent two years, and, perhaps, a little timely submission would win him back to her. None the less, the weekly trust was sacred.

The wave that had so long held back descended on Tom’s brain. He caught Badalia by the throat and forced her to her knees. It seemed just to him in that hour to punish an erring wife for two years of wilful desertion; and the more, in that she had confessed her guilt by refusing to give up the wage of sin.

Lascar Loo’s mother waited on the pavement without for the sounds of lamentation, but none came. Even if Tom had released her gullet Badalia would not have screamed.

‘Give it up, you slut!’ said Tom. ‘Is that ’ow you pay me back for all I’ve done?’

‘I can’t. ’Tain’t my money. Gawd forgive you, Tom, for wot you’re—,’ the voice ceased as the grip tightened, and Tom heaved Badalia against the bed. Her forehead struck the bed-post, and she sank, half kneeling, on the floor. It was impossible for a self-respecting man to refrain from kicking her: so Tom kicked with the deadly intelligence born of whisky. The head drooped to the floor, and Tom kicked at that till the crisp tingle of hair striking through his nailed boot with the chill of cold water, warned him that it might be as well to desist.

‘Where’s the curick’s money, you kep’ woman?’ he whispered in the blood-stained ear. But there was no answer—only a rattling at the door, and the voice of Jenny Wabstow crying ferociously, ‘Come out o’ that,

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Tom, an' come 'ome with me! An' you, Badalia, I'll tear your face off its bones!'

Tom's friends had delivered their message, and Jenny, after the first flood of passionate tears, rose up to follow Tom, and, if possible, to win him back. She was prepared even to endure an exemplary whacking for her performances in Hennessy's Rents. Lascar Loo's mother guided her to the chamber of horrors, and chuckled as she retired down the staircase. If Tom had not banged the soul out of Badalia, there would at least be a royal fight between that Badalia and Jenny. And Lascar Loo's mother knew well that Hell has no fury like a woman fighting above the life that is quick in her.

Still there was no sound audible in the street. Jenny swung back the unbolted door, to discover her man stupidly regarding a heap by the bed. An eminent murderer has remarked that if people did not die so untidily, most men, and all women, would commit at least one murder in their lives. Tom was reflecting on the present untidiness, and the whisky was fighting with the clear current of his thoughts.

'Don't make that noise,' he said. 'Come in quick.'

'My Gawd!' said Jenny, checking like a startled wild beast. 'Wot's all this 'ere? You ain't—'

'Dunno. 'Spose I did it.'

'Did it! You done it a sight too well this time.'

'She was aggravatin',' said Tom thickly, dropping back into the chair. 'That aggravatin' you'd never believe. Livin' on the fat o' the land among these aristocratic parsons an' all. Look at them white curtins on the bed. We ain't got no white curtins. What I want to know is—' The voice died as Badalia's had died, but from a different cause. The whisky was

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tightening its grip after the accomplished deed, and Tom's eyes were beginning to close. Badalia on the floor breathed heavily.

'No, nor like to 'ave,' said Jenny. 'You've done for 'er this time. You go!'

'Not me. She won't hurt. Do 'er good. I'm goin' to sleep. Look at those there clean sheets! Ain't you comin' too?'

Jenny bent over Badalia, and there was intelligence in the battered woman's eyes—intelligence and much hate.

'I never told 'im to do such,' Jenny whispered. ''Twas Tom's own doin'—none o' mine. Shall I get 'im took, dear?'

The eyes told their own story. Tom, who was beginning to snore, must not be taken by the Law.

'Go,' said Jenny. 'Get out! Get out of 'ere.'

'You—told—me—that—this afternoon,' said the man very sleepily. 'Lemme go asleep.'

'That wasn't nothing. You'd only 'it me. This time it's murder—murder-murder! Tom, you've killed 'er now.' She shook the man from his rest, and understanding with cold terror filled his fuddled brain.

'I done it for your sake, Jenny,' he whimpered feebly, trying to take her hand.

'You killed 'er for the money, same as you would ha' killed me. Get out o' this. Lay 'er on the bed first, you brute!'

They lifted Badalia on to the bed, and crept forth silently.

'I can't be took along o' you—and if you was took you'd say I made you do it, an' try to get me 'anged. Go away—anywhere outer 'ere,' said Jenny, and she dragged him down the stairs.

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‘Goin’ to look for the curick?’ said a voice from the pavement. Lascar Loo’s mother was still waiting patiently to hear Badalia squeal.

‘Wot curick?’ said Jenny swiftly. There was a chance of salving her conscience yet in regard to the bundle upstairs.

‘Anna—63 Roomer Terrace—close ’ere,’ said the old woman. She had never been favourably regarded by the curate. Perhaps, since Badalia had not squealed, Tom preferred smashing the man to the woman. There was no accounting for tastes.

Jenny thrust her man before her till they reached the nearest main road. ‘Go away, now,’ she gasped. ‘Go off anywheres, but don’t come back to me. I’ll never go with you again; an’, Tom—Tom, d’you ’ear me?—clean your boots.’

Vain counsel. The desperate thrust of disgust which she bestowed upon him sent him staggering face-down into the kennel, where a policeman showed interest in his welfare.

‘Took for a common drunk. Gawd send they don’t look at ’is boots! ’Anna, 63 Roomer Terrace!’ Jenny settled her hat and ran.

The excellent housekeeper of the Roomer Chambers still remembers how there arrived a young person, blue-lipped and gasping, who cried only: ‘Badalia, 17 Gunnison Street. Tell the curick to come at once—at once—at once!’ and vanished into the night. This message was borne to the Rev. Eustace Hanna, then enjoying his beauty-sleep. He saw there was urgency in the demand, and unhesitatingly knocked up Brother Victor across the landing. As a matter of etiquette, Rome and England divided their cases in the district according

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to the creeds of the sufferers; but Badalia was an institution, and not a case, and there was no district-relief etiquette to be considered. 'Something has happened to Badalia,' the curate said, 'and it's your affair as well as mine. Dress and come along.'

'I am ready,' was the answer. 'Is there any hint of what's wrong?'

'Nothing beyond a runaway-knock and a call.'

'Then it's a confinement or a murderous assault. Badalia wouldn't wake us up for anything less. I'm qualified for both, thank God.'

The two men raced to Gunnison Street, for there were no cabs abroad, and under any circumstances a cab-fare means two days' good firing for such as are perishing with cold. Lascar Loo's mother had gone to bed, and the door was naturally on the latch. They found considerably more than they had expected in Badalia's room, and the Church of Rome acquitted itself nobly with bandages, while the Church of England could only pray to be delivered from the sin of envy. The Order of Little Ease, recognising that the soul is in most cases accessible through the body, take their measures and train their men accordingly.

'She'll do now,' said Brother Victor, in a whisper. 'It's internal bleeding, I fear, and a certain amount of injury to the brain. She has a husband, of course?'

'They all have, more's the pity.'

'Yes, there's a domesticity about these injuries that shows their origin.' He lowered his voice. 'It's a perfectly hopeless business, you understand. Twelve hours at the most.'

Badalia's right hand began to beat on the counterpane, palm down.

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'I think you are wrong,' said the Church of England. 'She is going.'

'No, that's not the picking at the counterpane,' said the Church of Rome. 'She wants to say something; you know her better than I.'

The curate bent very low.

'Send for Miss Eva,' said Badalia, with a cough.

'In the morning. She will come in the morning,' said the curate, and Badalia was content. Only the Church of Rome, who knew something of the human heart, knitted his brows and said nothing. After all, the law of his Order was plain. His duty was to watch till the dawn while the moon went down.

It was a little before her sinking that the Rev. Eustace Hanna said, 'Hadn't we better send for Sister Eva? She seems to be going fast.'

Brother Victor made no answer, but as early as decency admitted there came one to the door of the house of the Little Sisters of the Red Diamond and demanded Sister Eva, that she might soothe the pain of Badalia Herodsfoot. That man, saying very little, led her to Gunnison Street, No. 17, and into the room where Badalia lay. Then he stood on the landing, and bit the flesh of his fingers in agony, because he was a priest trained to know, and knew how the hearts of men and women beat back at the rebound, so that Love is born out of horror, and passion declares itself when the soul is quivering with pain.

Badalia, wise to the last, husbanded her strength till the coming of Sister Eva. It is generally maintained by the Little Sisters of the Red Diamond that she died in delirium, but since one Sister at least took a half of her dying advice, this seems uncharitable.

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She tried to turn feebly on the bed, and the poor broken human machinery protested according to its nature.

Sister Eva started forward, thinking that she heard the dread forerunner of the death-rattle. Badalia lay still conscious, and spoke with startling distinctness, the irrepressible irreverence of the street-hawker, the girl who had danced on the winkle-barrow, twinkling in her one available eye.

'Sounds jest like Mrs. Jessel, don't it? Before she's 'ad 'er lunch an' 'as been talkin' all the mornin' to her classes.'

Neither Sister Eva nor the curate said anything. Brother Victor stood without the door, and the breath came harshly between his teeth, for he was in pain.

'Put a cloth over my 'ead,' said Badalia. 'I've got it good, an' I don't want Miss Eva to see. I ain't pretty this time.'

'Who was it?' said the curate.

'Man from outside. Never seed 'im no mor'n Adam. Drunk, I s'pose. S'elp me Gawd that's truth! Is Miss Eva 'ere? I can't see under the towel. I've got it good, Miss Eva. Excuse my not shakin' 'ands with you, but I'm not strong, an' it's fourpence for Mrs. Imeny's beef-tea, an' wot you can give 'er for baby-linning. Allus 'avin' kids, these people. I 'adn't oughter talk, for my 'usband 'e never come a-nigh me these two years, or I'd a-bin as bad as the rest; but 'e never come a-nigh me. . . . A man come and 'it me over the 'ead, an' 'e kicked me, Miss Eva; so it was just the same's if I had ha' had a 'usband, ain't it? The book's in the drawer, Mister 'Anna, an' it's all right, an' I never guv up a copper o' the trust money—not a copper. You look under the chist o' drawers—all wot isn't

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spent this week is there. . . . An', Miss Eva, don't you wear that gray bonnick no more. I kep' you from the diptheery, an'—an' I didn't want to keep you so, but the curick said it 'ad to be done. I'd a sooner ha' took up with 'im than any one, only Tom 'e come, an' then—you see, Miss Eva, Tom 'e never come a-nigh me for two years, nor I 'aven't seen 'im yet. S'elp me—, I 'aven't. Do you 'ear? But you two go along, and make a match of it. I've wished otherways often, but o' course it was not for the likes o' me. If Tom 'ad come back, which 'e never did, I'd ha' been like the rest—sixpence for beef-tea for the baby, an' a shilling for layin' out the baby. You've seen it in the books, Mister 'Anna. That's what it is; an' o' course, you couldn't never 'ave nothing to do with me. But a woman she wishes as she looks, an' never you 'ave no doubt about 'im, Miss Eva. I've seen it in 'is face time an' agin—time an' agin. . . . Make it a four pound ten funeral—with a pall.'

It was a seven pound fifteen shilling funeral, and all Gunnison Street turned out to do it honour. All but two; for Lascar Loo's mother saw that a Power had departed, and that her road lay clear to the custards. Therefore, when the carriages rattled off, the cat on the doorstep heard the wail of the dying prostitute who could not die—

'Oh, mother, mother, won't you even let me lick the spoon!'

JUDSON AND THE EMPIRE

(1892)

Gloriana! The Don may attack us
Whenever his stomach be fain;
He must reach us before he can rack us . . .
And where are the galleons of Spain?

Dobson.

ONE of the many beauties of a democracy is its almost superhuman skill in developing troubles with other countries and finding its honour abraded in the process. A true democracy has a large contempt for all other lands that are governed by Kings and Queens and Emperors; and knows little and thinks less of their internal affairs. All it regards is its own dignity, which is its King, Queen, and Knave. So, sooner or later, its international differences end in the common people, who have no dignity, shouting the common abuse of the street, which also has no dignity, across the seas in order to vindicate their new dignity. The consequences may or may not be war; but the chances do not favour peace.

One advantage in living in a civilised land which is really governed lies in the fact that all the Kings and Queens and Emperors of the Continent are closely related by blood or marriage; are, in fact, one large family. A wise head among them knows that what appears to be

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a studied insult may be no more than some man's indigestion or woman's indisposition, to be treated as such, and explained by quiet talk. Again, a popular demonstration, headed by King and Court, may mean nothing more than that so-and-so's people are out of hand for the minute. When a horse falls to kicking in a hunt-crowd at a gate, the rider does not dismount, but puts his open hand behind him, and the others draw aside. It is so with the rulers of men. In the old days they cured their own and their people's bad temper with fire and slaughter; but now that the fire is so long of range and the slaughter so large, they do other things; and few among their people guess how much they owe of mere life and money to what the slang of the minute calls 'puppets' and 'luxuries.'

Once upon a time there was a little Power, the half-bankrupt wreck of a once great empire, that lost its temper with England, the whipping-boy of all the world, and behaved, as every one said, most scandalously. But it is not generally known that that Power fought a pitched battle with England and won a glorious victory. The trouble began with the people. Their own misfortunes had been many, and for private rage it is always refreshing to find a vent in public swearing. Their national vanity had been deeply injured, and they thought of their ancient glories and the days when their fleets had first rounded the Cape of Storms, and their own newspapers called upon Camoens and urged them to extravagances. It was the gross, smooth, sleek, lying England that was checking their career of colonial expansion. They assumed at once that their ruler was in league with England, so they cried with great heat that they would forthwith become a Republic and colonially

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expand themselves as a free people should. This made plain, the people threw stones at the English Consuls and spat at English ladies, and cut off drunken sailors of Our fleet in their ports and hammered them with oars, and made things very unpleasant for tourists at their customs, and threatened awful deaths to the consumptive invalids of Madeira, while the junior officers of the army drank fruit-extracts and entered into most blood-curdling conspiracies against their monarch; all with the object of being a Republic. Now the history of the South American Republics shows that it is not good that Southern Europeans should be also Republicans. They glide too quickly into military despotism; and the propping of men against walls and shooting them in detachments can be arranged much more economically and with less effect on the death-rate by a hide-bound monarchy. Still the performances of the Power as represented by its people were extremely inconvenient. It was the kicking horse in the crowd, and probably the rider explained that he could not check it. So the people enjoyed all the glory of war with none of the risks, and the tourists who were stoned in their travels returned stolidly to England and told the 'Times' that the police arrangements of foreign towns were defective.

This, then, was the state of affairs north the Line. South it was more strained, for there the Powers were at direct issue: England, unable to go back because of the pressure of adventurous children behind her, and the actions of far-away adventurers who would not come to heel, but offering to buy out her rival; and the other Power, lacking men or money, stiff in the conviction that three hundred years of slave-holding and intermingling with the nearest natives gave an inalienable right to

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hold slaves and issue half-castes to all eternity. They had built no roads. Their towns were rotting under their hands; they had no trade worth the freight of a crazy steamer; and their sovereignty ran almost one musket-shot inland when things were peaceful. For these very reasons they raged all the more, and the things that they said and wrote about the manners and customs of the English would have driven a younger nation to the guns with a long red bill for wounded honour.

It was then that Fate sent down in a twin-screw shallow-draft gunboat, of some 270 tons displacement, designed for the defence of rivers, Lieutenant Harrison Edward Judson, to be known for the future as Bai-Jove-Judson. His type of craft looked exactly like a flat-iron with a match stuck up in the middle; it drew five feet of water or less; carried a four-inch gun forward, which was trained by the ship; and, on account of its persistent rolling, was, to live in, three degrees worse than a torpedo-boat. When Judson was appointed to take charge of the thing on her little trip of six or seven thousand miles southward, his first remark as he went to look her over in dock was, 'Bai Jove, that topmast wants staying forward!' The topmast was a stick about as thick as a clothes-prop; but the flat-iron was Judson's first command, and he would not have exchanged his position for second post on the 'Anson' or the 'Howe.' He navigated her, under convoy, tenderly and lovingly to the Cape (the story of the topmast came with him), and he was so absurdly in love with his wallowing wash-tub when he reported himself, that the Admiral of the station thought it would be a pity to kill a new man on her, and allowed Judson to continue in his unenvied rule.

The Admiral visited her once in Simon's Bay, and she

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was bad, even for a flat-iron gunboat, strictly designed for river and harbour defence. She sweated clammy drops of dew between decks in spite of a preparation of powdered cork that was sprinkled over her inside paint. She rolled in the long Cape swell like a buoy; her foc's'le was a dog-kennel; Judson's cabin was practically under the water-line; not one of her dead-lights could ever be opened; and her compasses, thanks to the influence of the four-inch gun, were a curiosity even among Admiralty compasses. But Bai-Jove-Judson was radiant and enthusiastic. He had even contrived to fill Mr. Davies, the second-class engine-room artificer, who was his chief engineer, with the glow of his passion. The Admiral, who remembered his own first command, when pride forbade him to slack off a single rope on a dewy night, and he had racked his rigging to pieces in consequence, looked at the flat-iron keenly. Her fenders were done all over with white sennit, which was truly white; her big gun was varnished with a better composition than the Admiralty allowed; the spare sights were cased as carefully as the chronometers; the chocks for spare spars, two of them, were made of four-inch Burma teak carved with dragons' heads (that was one result of Bai-Jove-Judson's experiences with the naval brigade in the Burmese war), the bow-anchor was varnished instead of being painted, and there were charts other than the Admiralty scale supplied. The Admiral was well pleased, for he loved a ship's husband—a man who had a little money of his own and was willing to spend it on his command. Judson looked at him hopefully. He was only a Junior Navigating Lieutenant under eight years' standing. He might be kept in Simon's Bay for six months, and his ship at sea was his delight. The dream

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of his heart was to enliven her dismal official gray with a line of gold-leaf and, perhaps, a little scroll-work at her blunt barge-like bows.

‘There’s nothing like a first command, is there?’ said the Admiral, reading his thoughts. ‘You seem to have rather queer compasses though. Better get them adjusted.’

‘It’s no use, sir,’ said Judson. ‘The gun would throw out the Pole itself. But—but I’ve got the hang of most of the weaknesses.’

‘Will you be good enough to lay that gun over thirty degrees, please?’ The gun was put over. Round and round and round went the needle merrily, and the Admiral whistled.

‘You must have kept close to your convoy?’

‘Saw her twice between here and Madeira, sir,’ said Judson with a flush, for he resented the slur on his steamship. ‘She’s—she’s a little out of hand now, but she will settle down after a while.’

The Admiral went over the side, according to the rules of the Service, but the Staff-Captain must have told the other men of the squadron in Simon’s Bay, for they one and all made light of the flat-iron for many days. ‘What can you shake out of her, Judson?’ said the Lieutenant of the ‘Mongoose,’ a real white-painted ram-bow gunboat with quick-firing guns, as he came into the upper veranda of the little naval Club overlooking the dockyard one hot afternoon. It is in that club, as the captains come and go, that you hear all the gossip of all the Seven Seas.

‘Ten point four,’ said Bai-Jove-Judson.

‘Ah! That was on her trial trip. She’s too much by the head now. I told you staying that topmast would throw her out.’

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‘You leave my top-hamper alone,’ said Judson, for the joke was beginning to pall on him.

‘Oh, my soul! Listen to him. Juddy’s top-hamper. Keate, have you heard of the flat-iron’s top-hamper? You’re to leave it alone. Commodore Judson’s feelings are hurt.’

Keate was the Torpedo Lieutenant in the big ‘Vortigern,’ and he despised small things. ‘His top-hamper,’ said he slowly. ‘Oh, ah yes, of course. Juddy, there’s a shoal of mullet in the bay, and I think they’re foul of your screws. Better go down, or they’ll carry away something.’

‘I don’t let things carry away as a rule. You see I’ve no Torpedo Lieutenant aboard, thank God.’

Keate within the past week had so managed to bungle the slinging-in of a small torpedo-boat on the ‘Vortigern’ that the boat had broken the crutches on which she rested, and was herself being repaired in the dockyard under the Club windows.

‘One for you, Keate. Never mind, Juddy, you’re hereby appointed dockyard-tender for the next three years, and if you’re very good and there’s no sea on, you shall take me round the harbour. Waitabeechee, Commodore. What’ll you take? Vanderhum for the “Cook and the captain bold, And the mate o’ the ‘Nancy’ brig, And the bo’sun tight” [Juddy, put that cue down or I’ll put you under arrest for insulting the lieutenant of a real ship], “And the midshipmite, And the crew of the captain’s gig.” ’

By this time Judson had pinned him in a corner, and was prodding him with the half-butt. The Admiral’s Secretary entered, and saw the scuffle from the door.

‘Ouch! Juddy, I apologise. Take that—er—top-

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mast of yours away! Here's the man with the bow-string. I wish I were a Staff-Captain instead of a bloody lootenant. Sperril sleeps below every night. That's what makes Sperril tumble home from the waist upwards. Sperril, I defy you to touch me. I'm under orders for Zanzibar. Probably I shall annex it!

'Judson, the Admiral wants to see you!' said the Staff-Captain, disregarding the scoffer of the 'Mongoose.'

'I told you you'd be a dockyard-tender yet, Juddy. A side of fresh beef to-morrow and three dozen snapper on ice. On ice, you understand, Juddy?'

Bai-Jove-Judson and the Staff-Captain went out together.

'Now, what does the old man want with Judson?' said Keate from the bar.

'Don't know. Juddy's a damned good fellow, though. I wish to goodness he was in the "Mongoose" with us.'

The Lieutenant of the 'Mongoose' dropped into a chair and read the mail-papers for an hour. Then he saw Bai-Jove-Judson in the street and shouted to him. Judson's eyes were very bright, and his figure was held very straight, and he moved joyously. Except for the Lieutenant of the 'Mongoose,' the Club was empty.

'Juddy, there will be a beautiful row,' said that young man when he had heard the news delivered in an undertone. 'You'll probably have to fight, and yet I can't see what the old man's thinking of to—'

'My orders are not to row under any circumstances,' said Judson.

'Go-look-see? That all? When do you go?'

'To-night if I can. I must go down and see about things. I say, I may want a few men for the day.'

'Anything on the "Mongoose" at your service. There's

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my gig come over now. I know that coast, dead, drunk, or asleep, and you'll need all the knowledge you can get. If it had only been us two together! Come along with me.'

For one whole hour Judson remained closeted in the stern cabin of the 'Mongoose,' listening, poring over chart upon chart and taking notes, and for an hour the marine at the door heard nothing but things like these: 'Now you'll have to lie in here if there's any sea on. That current is ridiculously under-estimated, and it sets west at this season of the year, remember. Their boats never come south of this, see? So it's no good looking out for them.' And so on and so forth, while Judson lay at length on the locker by the three-pounder, and smoked and absorbed it all.

Next morning there was no flat-iron in Simon's Bay; only a little smudge of smoke off Cape Hangklip to show that Mr. Davies, the second-class engine-room artificer, was giving her all she could carry. At the Admiral's house the ancient and retired bo'sun who had seen many admirals come and go, brought out his paint and brushes and gave a new coat of pure raw pea-green to the two big cannon balls that stood one on each side of the Admiral's entrance-gate. He felt dimly that great events were stirring.

And the flat-iron, constructed, as has been before said, solely for the defence of rivers, met the great roll off Cape Agulhas and was swept from end to end, and sat upon her twin screws, and leaped as gracefully as a cow in a bog from one sea to another, till Mr. Davies began to fear for the safety of his engines, and the Kroo boys that made the majority of the crew were deathly sick. She ran along a very badly-lighted coast, past bays that were no bays, where ugly flat-topped rocks lay almost

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level with the water, and very many extraordinary things happened that have nothing to do with the story, but they were all duly logged by Bai-Jove-Judson.

At last the coast changed and grew green and low and exceedingly muddy, and there were broad rivers whose bars were little islands standing three or four miles out at sea, and Bai-Jove-Judson hugged the shore more closely than ever, remembering what the lieutenant of the 'Mongoose' had told him. Then he found a river full of the smell of fever and mud, with green stuff growing far into its waters, and a current that made the flat-iron gasp and grunt.

'We will turn up here,' said Bai-Jove-Judson, and they turned up accordingly; Mr. Davies wondering what in the world it all meant, and the Kroo boys grinning merrily. Bai-Jove-Judson went forward to the bows and meditated, staring through the muddy waters. After two hours of rooting through this desolation at an average rate of five miles an hour, his eyes were cheered by the sight of one white buoy in the coffee-hued mid-stream. The flat-iron crept up to it cautiously, and a leadsman took soundings all round it from a dinghy, while Bai-Jove-Judson smoked and thought, with his head on one side.

'About seven feet, isn't there?' said he. 'That must be the tail-end of the shoal. There's four fathom in the fairway. Knock that buoy down with axes. I don't think it's picturesque, somehow.' The Kroomen hacked the wooden sides to pieces in three minutes, and the mooring-chain sank with the last splinters of wood. Bai-Jove-Judson laid the flat-iron carefully over the site, while Mr. Davies watched, biting his nails nervously.

'Can you back her against this current?' said Bai-

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Jove-Judson. Mr. Davies could, inch by inch, but only inch by inch, and Bai-Jove-Judson stood in the bows and gazed at various things on the bank as they came into line or opened out. The flat-iron dropped down over the tail of the shoal, exactly where the buoy had been, and backed once more before Bai-Jove-Judson was satisfied. Then they went up-stream for half an hour, put into shoal water by the bank and waited, with a slip-rope on the anchor.

‘Seems to me,’ said Mr. Davies deferentially, ‘like as if I heard some one a-firing off at intervals, so to say.’

There was beyond doubt a dull mutter in the air.

‘Seems to me,’ said Bai-Jove-Judson, ‘as if I heard a screw. Stand by to slip her moorings.’

Another ten minutes passed and the beat of engines grew plainer. Then round the bend of the river came a remarkably prettily-built white-painted gunboat with a blue and white flag bearing a red boss in the centre.

‘Unshackle abaft the windlass! Stream both buoys! Easy astern. Let go, all!’ The slip-rope flew out, the two buoys bobbed in the water to mark where anchor and cable had been left, and the flat-iron waddled out into midstream with the white ensign at her one mast-head.

‘Give her all you can. That thing has the legs of us,’ said Judson. ‘And down we go.’

‘It’s war—bloody war! He’s going to fire,’ said Mr. Davies, looking up through the engine-room hatch.

The white gunboat without a word of explanation fired three guns at the flat-iron, cutting the trees on the banks into green chips. Bai-Jove-Judson was at the wheel, and Mr. Davies and the current helped the boat to an almost respectable degree of speed.

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It was an exciting chase, but it did not last for more than five minutes. The white gunboat fired again, and Mr. Davies in his engine-room gave a wild shout.

‘What’s the matter? Hit?’ said Bai-Jove-Judson.

‘No, I’ve just seized of your roos-de-gare. Beg y’ pardon, sir.’

‘Right O! Just the half a fraction of a point more.’ The wheel turned under the steady hand, as Bai-Jove-Judson watched his marks on the bank falling in line swiftly as troops anxious to aid. The flat-iron smelt the shoal-water under her, checked for an instant, and went on. ‘Now we’re over. Come along, you thieves, there!’ said Judson.

The white gunboat, too hurried even to fire, was storming in the wake of the flat-iron, steering as she steered. This was unfortunate, because the lighter craft was dead over the missing buoy.

‘What you do here?’ shouted a voice from the bows.

‘I’m going on. Sit tight. Now you’re arranged for.’

There was a crash and a clatter as the white gunboat’s nose took the shoal, and the brown mud boiled up in oozy circles under her forefoot. Then the current caught her stern on the starboard side and drove her broadside on to the shoal, slowly and gracefully. There she heeled at an undignified angle, and her crew yelled aloud.

‘Neat! Oh, damn neat!’ quoth Mr. Davies, dancing on the engine-room plates, while the Kroostokers beamed.

The flat-iron turned up-stream again, and passed under the hove-up starboard side of the white gunboat, to be received with howls and imprecations in a strange tongue. The stranded boat, exposed even to her lower strakes, was as defenceless as a turtle on its back, without the advantage of the turtle’s plating. And the one

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big bluff gun in the bows of the flat-iron was unpleasantly near.

But the captain was valiant and swore mightily. Bai-Jove-Judson took no sort of notice. His business was to go up the river.

‘We will come in a flotilla of boats and ecraser your vile tricks,’ said the captain, with language that need not be published.

Then said Bai-Jove-Judson, who was a linguist: ‘You stayo where you areo, or I’ll leave a holo in your bottomo that will make you muchos perforatados.’

There was a great deal of mixed language in reply, but Bai-Jove-Judson was out of hearing in a few minutes, and Mr. Davies, himself a man of few words, confided to one of his subordinates that Lieutenant Judson was ‘a most remarkable prompt officer in a way of putting it.’

For two hours the flat-iron pawed madly through the muddy water, and that which had been at first a mutter became a distinct rumble.

‘Was war declared?’ said Mr. Davies, and Bai-Jove-Judson laughed. ‘Then, damn his eyes, he might have spoilt my pretty little engines. There’s war up there, though.’

The next bend brought them full in sight of a small but lively village, built round a whitewashed mud house of some pretensions. There were scores and scores of saddle-coloured soldiery in dirty white uniforms running to and fro and shouting round a man in a litter, and on a gentle slope that ran inland for four or five miles something like a brisk battle was raging round a rude stockade. A smell of unburied carcasses floated through the air and vexed the sensitive nose of Mr. Davies, who spat over the side.

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‘I want to get this gun on that house,’ said Bai-Jove-Judson, indicating the superior dwelling over whose flat roof floated the blue and white flag. The little twin-screws kicked up the water exactly as a hen’s legs kick in the dust before she settles down to a bath. The little boat moved uneasily from left to right, backed, yawed again, went ahead, and at last the gray, blunt gun’s nose was held as straight as a rifle-barrel on the mark indicated. Then Mr. Davies allowed the whistle to speak as it is not allowed to speak in Her Majesty’s service on account of waste of steam. The soldiery of the village gathered into knots and groups and bunches, and the firing up the hill ceased, and every one except the crew of the flat-iron yelled aloud. Something like an English cheer came down wind.

‘Our chaps in mischief for sure, probably,’ said Mr. Davies. ‘They must have declared war weeks ago, in a kind of way, seems to me.’

‘Hold her steady, you son of a soldier!’ shouted Bai-Jove-Judson, as the muzzle fell off the white house.

Something rang as loudly as a ship’s bell on the forward plates of the flat-iron, something spluttered in the water, and another thing cut a groove in the deck planking an inch in front of Bai-Jove-Judson’s left foot. The saddle-coloured soldiery were firing as the mood took them, and the man in the litter waved a shining sword. The muzzle of the big gun kicked down a fraction as it was laid on the mud wall at the bottom of the house garden. Ten pounds of gunpowder shut up in a hundred pounds of metal was its charge. Three or four yards of the mud wall jumped up a little, as a man jumps when he is caught in the small of the back with a knee-cap, and then fell forward, spreading fan-wise in the fall.

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The soldiery fired no more that day, and Judson saw an old black woman climb to the flat roof of the house. She fumbled for a time with the flag halliards, then, finding that they were jammed, took off her one garment, which happened to be an Isabella-coloured petticoat, and waved it impatiently. The man in the litter flourished a white handkerchief, and Bai-Jove-Judson grinned. 'Now we'll give 'em one up the hill. Round with her, Mr. Davies. Curse the man who invented these floating gun-platforms! When can I pitch in a notice without slaying one of those little devils?'

The side of the slope was speckled with men returning in a disorderly fashion to the river-front. Behind them marched a small but very compact body of men who had filed out of the stockade. These last dragged quick-firing guns with them.

'Bai Jove, it's a regular army. I wonder whose,' said Bai-Jove-Judson, and he waited developments. The descending troops met and mixed with the troops in the village, and, with the litter in the centre, crowded down to the river, till the men with the quick-firing guns came up behind them. Then they divided left and right and the detachment marched through.

'Heave these damned things over!' said the leader of the party, and one after another ten little gatlings splashed into the muddy water. The flat-iron lay close to the bank.

'When you're quite done,' said Bai-Jove-Judson politely, 'would you mind telling me what's the matter? I'm in charge here.'

'We're the Pioneers of the General Development Company,' said the leader. 'These little bounders have been hammering us in lager for twelve hours, and

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we're getting rid of their gatlings. Had to climb out and take them; but they've snaffled the lock-actions. Glad to see you.'

'Any one hurt?'

'No one killed exactly; but we're very dry.'

'Can you hold your men?'

The man turned round and looked at his command with a grin. There were seventy of them, all dusty and unkempt.

'We shan't sack this ash-bin if that's what you mean. We're mostly gentlemen here, though we don't look it.'

'All right. Send the head of this post, or fort, or village, or whatever it is, aboard, and make what arrangements you can for your men.'

'We'll find some barrack accommodation somewhere. Hullo! You in the litter there, go aboard the gunboat.' The command wheeled round, pushed through the dislocated soldiery, and began to search through the village for spare huts.

The little man in the litter came aboard smiling nervously. He was in the fullest of full uniform, with many yards of gold lace and dangling chains. Also he wore very large spurs; the nearest horse being not more than four hundred miles away. 'My children,' said he, facing the silent soldiery, 'lay aside your arms.'

Most of the men had dropped them already and were sitting down to smoke. 'Let nothing,' he added in his own tongue, 'tempt you to kill these who have sought your protection.'

'Now,' said Bai-Jove-Judson, on whom the last remark was lost, 'will you have the goodness to explain what the deuce you mean by all this nonsense?'

'It was of a necessitate,' said the little man. 'The oper-

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ations of war are unconformible. I am the Governor and I operate Captain. Be'old my little sword!'

'Confound your little sword, sir. I don't want it. You've fired on our flag. You've been firing at our people here for a week, and I've been fired at coming up the river.'

'Ah! The "Guadala." She have misconstrued you for a slaver possibly. How are the "Guadala"?''

'Mistook a ship of Her Majesty's navy for a slaver! You mistake any craft for a slaver. Bai Jove, sir, I've a good mind to hang you at the yard-arm!'

There was nothing nearer that terrible spar than the walking-stick in the rack of Judson's cabin. The Governor looked at the one mast and smiled a deprecating smile.

'The position is embarrassment,' he said. 'Captain, do you think those illustrious traders burn my capital? My people will give them beer.'

'Never mind the traders, I want an explanation.'

'Hum! There are popular uprising in Europe, Captain—in my country.' His eye wandered aimlessly round the horizon.

'What has that to do with—'

'Captain, you are very young. There is still uproariment. But I,'—here he slapped his chest till his epauletts jingled—'I am loyalist to pits of all my stomachs.'

'Go on,' said Judson, and his mouth quivered.

'An order arrive to me to establish a custom-houses here, and to collect of the taximent from the traders when she are come here necessarily. That was on account of political understandings with your country and mine. But to that arrangement there was no money also. Not one damn little cowrie! I desire damnably

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to extend all commercial things, and why? I am loyalist and there is rebellion—yes, I tell you—Republics in my country for to just begin. You do not believe? See some time how it exist. I cannot make this custom-houses and pay so the high-paid officials. The people too in my country they say the King she has no regardance into Honour of her nation. He throw away everything—Gladstone her all, you say, hey?’

‘Yes, that’s what we say,’ said Judson with a grin.

‘Therefore they say, let us be Republics on hot cakes. But I—I am loyalist to all my hands’ ends. Captain, once I was attache at Mexico. I say the Republics are no good. The peoples have her stomach high. They desire—they desire—Oh, course for the bills.’

‘What on earth is that?’

‘The cock-fight for pay at the gate. You give something, pay for see bloody-row. Do I make my comprehension?’

‘A run for their money—is that what you mean? Gad, you’re a sporting Governor!’

‘So I say. I am loyalist too.’ He smiled more easily. ‘Now how can anything do herself for the customs-houses; but when the Company’s mens she arrives, then a cock-fight for pay-at-gate that is quite correct. My army he says it will Republic and shoot me off upon walls if I have not give her blood. An army, Captain, are terrible in her angries—especialment when she are not paid. I know too,’ here he laid his hand on Judson’s shoulder, ‘I know too we are old friends. Yes! Badajos, Almeida, Fuentes d’Onor—time ever since; and a little, little cock-fight for pay-at-gate that is good for my King. More sit her tight on throne behind, you see? Now,’ he waved his free hand round the decayed village,

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'I say to my armies, Fight! Fight the Company's men when she come, but fight not so very strong that you are any dead. It is all in the raporta that I send. But you understand, Captain, we are good friends all the time. Ah! Ciudad Rodrigo, you remember? No? Perhaps your father then? So you see no one are dead, and we fight a fight, and it is all in the raporta, to please the people in our country; and my armies they do not put me against the walls, you see?'

'Yes; but the "Guadala." She fired on us. Was that part of your game, my joker?'

'The "Guadala." Ah! No, I think not. Her captain he is too big fool. But I thought she have gone down the coast. Those your gunboats poke her nose and shove her oar in every place. How is "Guadala"?''

'On a shoal. Stuck till I take her off.'

'There are any deads?'

'No.'

The Governor drew a breath of deep relief. 'There are no deads here. So you see none are deads anywhere, and nothing is done. Captain, you talk to the Company's mens. I think they are not pleased.'

'Naturally.'

'They have no senses. I thought to go backwards again they would. I leave her stockade alone all night to let them out, but they stay and come facewards to me, not backwards. They did not know we must conquer much in all these battles, or the King, he is kicked off her throne. Now we have won this battle—this great battle,' he waved his arms abroad, 'and I think you will say so that we have won, Captain. You are loyalist also? You would not disturb to the peaceful Europe? Captain, I tell you this. Your Queen she know too.'

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She would not fight her cousin. It is a—a hand-up thing.'

'What?'

'Hand-up thing. Jobe you put. How you say?'

'Put-up job?'

'Yes. Put-up job. Who is hurt? We win. You lose. All righta!'

Bai-Jove-Judson had been exploding at intervals for the last five minutes. Here he broke down completely and roared aloud.

'But look here, Governor,' he said at last, 'I've got to think of other things than your riots in Europe. You've fired on our flag.'

'Captain, if you are me, you would have done how? And also, and also,' he drew himself up to his full height, 'we are both brave men of bravest countries. Our honour is the honour of our King,' here he uncovered, 'and of our Queen,' here he bowed low. 'Now, Captain, you shall shell my palace and I will be your prisoner.'

'Skittles!' said Bai-Jove-Judson. 'I can't shell that old hen-coop.'

'Then come to dinner. Madeira, she are still to us, and I have of the best she manufac.'

He skipped over the side beaming, and Bai-Jove-Judson went into the cabin to laugh his laugh out. When he had recovered a little he sent Mr. Davies to the head of the Pioneers, the dusty man with the gatlings, and the troops who had abandoned the pursuit of arms watched the disgraceful spectacle of two men reeling with laughter on the quarter-deck of a gunboat.

'I'll put my men to build him a custom-house,' said the head of the Pioneers gasping. 'We'll make him one decent road at least. That Governor ought to be

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knighted. I'm glad now that we didn't fight 'em in the open, or we'd have killed some of them. So he's won great battles, has he? Give him the compliments of the victims, and tell him I'm coming to dinner. You haven't such a thing as a dress-suit, have you? I haven't seen one for six months.'

That evening there was a dinner in the village—a general and enthusiastic dinner, whose head was in the Governor's house, and whose tail threshed at large throughout all the streets. The Madeira was everything that the Governor had said, and more, and it was tested against two or three bottles of Bai-Jove-Judson's best Vanderhum, which is Cape brandy ten years in the bottle, flavoured with orange-peel and spices. Before the coffee was removed (by the lady who had made the flag of truce) the Governor had given the whole of his governorship and its appurtenances, once to Bai-Jove-Judson for services rendered by Judson's grandfather in the Peninsular War, and once to the head of the Pioneers, in consideration of that gentleman's good friendship. After the negotiation he retreated for a while into an inner apartment, and there evolved a true and complete account of the defeat of the English arms, which he read with his cocked hat over one eye to Judson and his companion. It was Judson who suggested the sinking of the flat-iron with all hands, and the head of the Pioneers who supplied the list of killed and wounded (not more than two hundred) in his command.

'Gentlemen,' said the Governor from under his cocked hat, 'the peace of Europe are saved by this raporta. You shall all be Knights of the Golden Hide. She shall go by the "Guadala."'

'Great Heavens!' said Bai-Jove-Judson, flushed but

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composed. 'That reminds me that I've left that boat stuck on her broadside down the river. I must go down and soothe the commandante. He'll be blue with rage. Governor, let us go a sail on the river to cool our heads. A picnic, you understand.'

'Ya—as: everything I understand. Ho! A picnica! You are all my prisoner, but I am a good gaoler. We shall picnic on the river, and we shall take all the girls. Come on, my prisoners.'

'I do hope,' said the head of the Pioneers, staring from the veranda into the roaring village, 'that my chaps won't set the town alight by accident. Hullo! Hullo! A guard of honour for His Excellency, the most illustrious Governor!'

Some thirty men answered the call, made a swaying line upon a more swaying course, and bore the Governor most swayingly of all high in their arms as they staggered down to the river. And the song that they sang bade them, 'Swing, swing together, their body between their knees'; and they obeyed the words of the song faithfully, except that they were anything but 'steady from stroke to bow.' His Excellency the Governor slept on his uneasy litter, and did not wake when the chorus dropped him on the deck of the flat-iron.

'Good-night and good-bye,' said the head of the Pioneers to Judson. 'I'd give you my card if I had it, but I'm so damned drunk I hardly know my own Club. Oh yes! It's the Travellers. If ever we meet in town, remember me. I must stay here and look after my fellows. We're all right in the open, now. I s'pose you'll return the Governor some time. This is a political crisis. Good-night.'

The flat-iron went down-stream through the dark.

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The Governor slept on deck, and Judson took the wheel, but how he steered, and why he did not run into each bank many times, that officer does not remember. Mr. Davies did not note anything unusual, for there are two ways of taking too much, and Judson was only ward-room, not fo'c's'le drunk. As the night grew colder the Governor woke up, and expressed a desire for whisky and soda. When that came they were nearly abreast of the stranded 'Guadala,' and His Excellency saluted the flag that he could not see with loyal and patriotic strains.

'They do not see. They do not hear,' he cried. 'Ten thousand saints! They sleep, and I have won battles! Ha!'

He started forward to the gun, which, very naturally, was loaded, pulled the lanyard, and woke the dead night with the roar of the full charge behind a common shell. That shell, mercifully, just missed the stern of the 'Guadala,' and burst on the bank. 'Now you shall salute your Governor,' said he, as he heard feet running in all directions within the iron skin. 'Why you demand so base a quarter? I am here with all my prisoners.'

In the hurly-burly and the general shriek for mercy his reassurances were not heard.

'Captain,' said a grave voice from the ship, 'we have surrendered. Is it the custom of the English to fire on a helpless ship?'

'Surrendered! Holy Virgin! I go to cut off all their heads. You shall be ate by wild ants—flog and drowned! Throw me a balcony. It is I, the Governor! You shall never surrender. Judson of my soul, ascend her inside, and send me a bed, for I am sleepy; but, oh, I will multiple time kill that captain!'

'Oh!' said the voice in the darkness, 'I begin to com-

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prehend.' And a rope-ladder was thrown, up which the Governor scrambled, with Judson at his heels.

'Now we will enjoy executions,' said the Governor on the deck. 'All these Republicans shall be shot. Little Judson, if I am not drunk, why are so sloping the boards which do not support?'

The deck, as I have said, was at a very stiff cant. His Excellency sat down, slid to leeward, and fell asleep again.

The captain of the 'Guadala' bit his moustache furiously, and muttered in his own tongue: '“This land is the father of great villains and the step-father of honest men.” You see our material, Captain. It is so everywhere with us. You have killed some of the rats, I hope?'

'Not a rat,' said Judson genially.

'That is a pity. If they were dead, our country might send us men, but our country is dead too, and I am dishonoured on a mud-bank through your English treachery.'

'Well, it seems to me that firing on a little tub of our size without a word of warning when you knew that the countries were at peace is treachery enough in a small way.'

'If one of my guns had touched you, you would have gone to the bottom, all of you. I would have taken the risk with my Government. By that time it would have been—'

'A Republic. So you really did mean fighting on your own hook! You're rather a dangerous officer to cut loose in a navy like yours. Well, what are you going to do now?'

'Stay here. Go away in boats. What does it matter? That drunken cat'—he pointed to the shadow in which

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the Governor slept—'is here. I must take him back to his hole.'

'Very good. I'll tow you off at daylight if you get steam up.'

'Captain, I warn you that as soon as she floats again I will fight you.'

'Humbug! You'll have lunch with me, and then you'll take the Governor up the river.'

The captain was silent for some time. Then he said: 'Let us drink. What must be, must be, and after all we have not forgotten the Peninsular. You will admit, Captain, that it is bad to be run upon a shoal like a mud-dredger?'

'Oh, we'll pull you off before you can say knife. Take care of His Excellency. I shall try to get a little sleep now.'

They slept on both ships till the morning, and then the work of towing off the 'Guadala' began. With the help of her own engines, and the tugging and puffing of the flat-iron, she slid off the mud-bank sideways into deep water, the flat-iron immediately under her stern, and the big eye of the four-inch gun almost peering through the window of the captain's cabin.

Remorse in the shape of a violent headache had overtaken the Governor. He was uneasily conscious that he might perhaps have exceeded his powers, and the captain of the 'Guadala,' in spite of all his patriotic sentiments, remembered distinctly that no war had been declared between the two countries. He did not need the Governor's repeated reminders that war, serious war, meant a Republic at home, possible supersession in his command, and much shooting of living men against dead walls.

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‘We have satisfied our honour,’ said the Governor in confidence. ‘Our army is appeased, and the raporta that you take home will show that we were loyal and brave. That other captain? Bah! He is a boy. He will call this a—a—**Judson** of my soul, how you say this is—all this affairs which have transpired between us?’

Judson was watching the last hawser slipping through the fairlead. ‘Call it? Oh, I should call it rather a lark. Now your boat’s all right, captain. When will you come to lunch?’

‘I told you,’ said the Governor, ‘it would be a *larque* to him.’

‘Mother of the Saints! then what is his seriousness?’ said the captain. ‘We shall be happy to come when you will. Indeed, we have no other choice,’ he added bitterly.

‘Not at all,’ said Judson, and as he looked at the three or four shot-blisters on the bows of his boat a brilliant idea took him. ‘It is we who are at your mercy. See how His Excellency’s guns knocked us about.’

‘Senor Capitan,’ said the Governor pityingly, ‘that is very sad. You are most injured, and your deck too, it is all shot over. We shall not be too severe on a beat man, shall we, Captain?’

‘You couldn’t spare us a little paint, could you? I’d like to patch up a little after the—action,’ said Judson meditatively, fingering his upper lip to hide a smile.

‘Our storeroom is at your disposition,’ said the captain of the ‘Guadala,’ and his eye brightened; for a few lead splashes on gray paint make a big show.

‘Mr. Davies, go aboard and see what they have to spare—to spare, remember. Their spar-colour with a little working up should be just our freeboard tint.’

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‘Oh yes. I’ll spare them,’ said Mr. Davies savagely. ‘I don’t understand this how-d’you-do and damn-your-eyes business coming one atop of the other, in a manner o’ speaking! By all rights, they’re our lawful prize, after a manner o’ sayin’.’

The Governor and the captain came to lunch in the absence of Mr. Davies. Bai-Jove-Judson had not much to offer them, but what he had was given as by a beaten foeman to a generous conqueror. When they were a little warmed—the Governor genial and the captain almost effusive—he explained quite casually over the opening of a bottle that it would not be to his interest to report the affair seriously, and it was in the highest degree improbable that the Admiral would treat it in any grave fashion.

‘When my decks are cut up’ (there was one groove across four planks), ‘and my plates buckled’ (there were five lead patches on three plates), ‘and I meet such a boat as the “Guadala,” and a mere accident saves me from being blown out of the water—’

‘Yes. A mere accident, Captain. The shoal-buoy has been lost,’ said the captain of the ‘Guadala.’

‘Ah? I do not know this river. That was very sad. But as I was saying, when an accident saves me from being sunk, what can I do but go away—if that is possible? But I fear that I have no coal for the sea-voyage. It is very sad.’ Judson had compromised on what he knew of the French tongue as a medium of communication.

‘It is enough,’ said the Governor, waving a generous hand. ‘Judson of my soul, the coal is yours and you shall be repaired—yes, repaired all over, of your battle’s wounds. You shall go with all the honours of all the wars. Your flag shall fly. Your drum shall beat.’

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Your, ah!—jolly-boys shall spoke their bayonets! Is it not so, Captain?’

‘As you say, Excellency. But those traders in the town. What of them?’

The Governor looked puzzled for an instant. He could not quite remember what had happened to those jovial men who had cheered him overnight. Judson interrupted swiftly: ‘His Excellency has set them to forced works on barracks and magazines, and, I think, a custom-house. When that is done they will be released, I hope, Excellency.’

‘Yes, they shall be released for your sake, little Judson of my heart.’ Then they drank the health of their respective sovereigns, while Mr. Davies superintended the removal of the scarred plank and the shot-marks on the deck and the bow-plates.

‘Oh, this is too bad,’ said Judson when they went on deck. ‘That idiot has exceeded his instructions, but—but you must let me pay for this!’

Mr. Davies, his legs in the water as he sat on a staging slung over the bows, was acutely conscious that he was being blamed in a foreign tongue. He twisted uneasily, and went on with his work.

‘What is it?’ said the Governor.

‘That thick-head has thought that we needed some gold-leaf, and he has borrowed that from your storeroom, but I must make it good.’ Then in English, ‘Stand up, Mr. Davies! What the Furnace in Tophet do you mean by taking their gold-leaf? My—, are we a set of hairy pirates to scoff the storeroom out of a painted Levantine bumboat. Look contrite, you butt-ended, broad-breeched, bottle-bellied, swivel-eyed son of a tinker, you! My Soul alive, can’t I maintain discipline

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in my own ship without a hired blacksmith of a boiler-riveter putting me to shame before a yellow-nosed pica-roon! Get off the staking, Mr. Davies, and go to the engine-room! Put down that leaf first, though, and leave the books where they are. I'll send for you in a minute. Go aft!

Now, only the upper half of Mr. Davies's round face was above the bulwarks when this torrent of abuse descended upon him; and it rose inch by inch as the shower continued, blank amazement, bewilderment, rage, and injured pride chasing each other across it till he saw his superior officer's left eyelid flutter on the cheek twice. Then he fled to the engine-room, and wiping his brow with a handful of cotton-waste, sat down to overtake circumstances.

'I am desolated,' said Judson to his companions, 'but you see the material that they give us. This leaves me more in your debt than before. The stuff I can replace [gold-leaf is never carried on floating gun-platforms], 'but for the insolence of that man how shall I apologise?'

Mr. Davies's mind moved slowly, but after a while he transferred the cotton-waste from his forehead to his mouth and bit on it to prevent laughter. He began a second dance on the engine-room plates. 'Neat! Oh, damned neat!' he chuckled. 'I've served with a good few, but there never was one so neat as him. And I thought he was the new kind that don't know how to throw a few words, as it were.'

'Mr. Davies, you can continue your work,' said Judson down the engine-room hatch. 'These officers have been good enough to speak in your favour. Make a thorough job of it while you are about it. Slap on every man you have. Where did you get hold of it?'

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‘Their storeroom is a regular theatre, sir. You couldn’t miss it. There’s enough for two first-rates, and I’ve scoffed the best half of it.’

‘Look sharp then. We shall be coaling from her this afternoon. You’ll have to cover it all up.’

‘Neat! Oh, damned neat!’ said Mr. Davies under his breath, as he gathered his subordinates together, and set about accomplishing the long-deferred wish of Judson’s heart.

It was the ‘Martin Frobisher,’ the flagship, a great war-boat when she was new, in the days when men built for sail as well as for steam. She could turn twelve knots under full sail, and it was under that that she stood up the mouth of the river, a pyramid of silver beneath the moon. The Admiral, fearing that he had given Judson a task beyond his strength, was coming to look for him, and incidentally to do a little diplomatic work along the coast. There was hardly wind enough to move the ‘Frobisher’ a couple of knots an hour, and the silence of the land closed about her as she entered the fairway. Her yards sighed a little from time to time, and the ripple under her bows answered the sigh. The full moon rose over the steaming swamps, and the Admiral gazing upon it thought less of Judson and more of the softer emotions. In answer to the very mood of his mind there floated across the silver levels of the water, mellowed by distance to a most poignant sweetness, the throb of a mandolin, and the voice of one who called upon a genteel Julia—upon Julia, and upon Love. The song ceased, and the sighing of the yards was all that broke the silence of the big ship.

Again the mandolin began, and the commander on

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the lee side of the quarter-deck grinned a grin that was reflected in the face of the signal-midshipman. Not a word of the song was lost, and the voice of the singer was the voice of Judson.

‘Last week down our alley came a toff,
Nice old geyser with a nasty cough,
Sees my missus, takes his topper off,
Quite in a gentlemanly way’—

and so on to the end of the verse. The chorus was borne by several voices, and the signal-midshipman’s foot began to tap the deck furtively.

‘“What cheer!” all the neighbours cried.
“Oo are you goin’ to meet, Bill?
’Ave you bought the street, Bill?”
Laugh?—I thought I should ha’ died
When I knocked ’em in the Old Kent Road.’

It was the Admiral’s gig, rowing softly, that came into the midst of that merry little smoking-concert. It was Judson, with the beribboned mandolin round his neck, who received the Admiral as he came up the side of the ‘Guadala,’ and it may or may not have been the Admiral who stayed till three in the morning and delighted the hearts of the captain and the Governor. He had come as an unbidden guest, and he departed as an honoured one, but strictly unofficial throughout. Judson told his tale next day in the Admiral’s cabin as well as he could in the face of the Admiral’s gales of laughter; but the most amazing tale was that told by Mr. Davies to his friends in the dockyard at Simon’s Town from the point

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of view of a second-class engine-room artificer, all unversed in diplomacy.

And if there be no truth either in my tale, which is Judson's tale, or the tales of Mr. Davies, you will not find in harbour at Simon's Town to-day a flat-bottomed, twin-screw gunboat, designed solely for the defence of rivers, about two hundred and seventy tons displacement and five feet draught, wearing in open defiance of the rules of the Service a gold line on her gray paint. It follows also that you will be compelled to credit that version of the fray which, signed by His Excellency the Governor and despatched in the 'Guadala,' satisfied the self-love of a great and glorious people, and saved a monarchy from the ill-considered despotism which is called a Republic.

THE CHILDREN OF THE ZODIAC

(1891)

Though thou love her as thyself,
As a self of purer clay,
Though her parting dim the day,
Stealing grace from all alive,
 Heartily know
 When half Gods go
The Gods arrive.

Emerson.

THOUSANDS of years ago, when men were greater than they are to-day, the Children of the Zodiac lived in the world. There were six Children of the Zodiac—the Ram, the Bull, Leo, the Twins, and the Girl; and they were afraid of the Six Houses which belonged to the Scorpion, the Balance, the Crab, the Fishes, the Archer, and the Waterman. Even when they first stepped down upon the earth and knew that they were immortal Gods, they carried this fear with them; and the fear grew as they became better acquainted with mankind and heard stories of the Six Houses. Men treated the Children as Gods and came to them with prayers and long stories of wrong, while the Children of the Zodiac listened and could not understand.

A mother would fling herself before the feet of the

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Twins, or the Bull, crying: 'My husband was at work in the fields and the Archer shot him and he died; and my son will also be killed by the Archer. Help me!' The Bull would lower his huge head and answer: 'What is that to me?' Or the Twins would smile and continue their play, for they could not understand why the water ran out of people's eyes. At other times a man and a woman would come to Leo or the Girl crying: 'We two are newly married and we are very happy. Take these flowers.' As they threw the flowers they would make mysterious sounds to show that they were happy, and Leo and the Girl wondered even more than the Twins why people shouted 'Ha! ha! ha!' for no cause.

This continued for thousands of years by human reckoning, till on a day, Leo met the Girl walking across the hills and saw that she had changed entirely since he had last seen her. The Girl, looking at Leo, saw that he too had changed altogether. Then they decided that it would be well never to separate again, in case even more startling changes should occur when the one was not at hand to help the other. Leo kissed the Girl and all Earth felt that kiss, and the Girl sat down on a hill and the water ran out of her eyes; and this had never happened before in the memory of the Children of the Zodiac.

As they sat together a man and a woman came by, and the man said to the woman:

'What is the use of wasting flowers on those dull Gods? They will never understand, darling.'

The Girl jumped up and put her arms round the woman, crying, 'I understand. Give me the flowers and I will give you a kiss.'

Leo said beneath his breath to the man: 'What was

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the new name that I heard you give to your woman just now?’

The man answered, ‘Darling, of course.’

‘Why “of course”?’ said Leo; ‘and if of course, what does it mean?’

‘It means “very dear,” and you have only to look at your wife to see why.’

‘I see,’ said Leo; ‘you are quite right’; and when the man and the woman had gone on he called the Girl ‘darling wife’; and the Girl wept again from sheer happiness.

‘I think,’ she said at last, wiping her eyes, ‘I think that we two have neglected men and women too much. What did you do with the sacrifices they made to you, Leo?’

‘I let them burn,’ said Leo; ‘I could not eat them. What did you do with the flowers?’

‘I let them wither. I could not wear them, I had so many of my own,’ said the Girl, ‘and now I am sorry.’

‘There is nothing to grieve for,’ said Leo; ‘we belong to each other.’

As they were talking the years of men’s life slipped by unnoticed, and presently the man and the woman came back, both white-headed, the man carrying the woman.

‘We have come to the end of things,’ said the man quietly. ‘This that was my wife—’

‘As I am Leo’s wife,’ said the Girl quickly, her eyes staring.

‘—was my wife, has been killed by one of your Houses.’ The man set down his burden, and laughed.

‘Which House?’ said Leo angrily, for he hated all the Houses equally.

‘You are Gods, you should know,’ said the man. ‘We have lived together and loved one another, and I

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have left a good farm for my son. What have I to complain of except that I still live?’

As he was bending over his wife’s body there came a whistling through the air, and he started and tried to run away, crying, ‘It is the arrow of the Archer. Let me live a little longer—only a little longer!’ The arrow struck him and he died. Leo looked at the Girl and she looked at him, and both were puzzled.

‘He wished to die,’ said Leo. ‘He said that he wished to die, and when Death came he tried to run away. He is a coward.’

‘No, he is not,’ said the Girl; ‘I think I feel what he felt. Leo, we must learn more about this for their sakes.’

‘For their sakes,’ said Leo, very loudly.

‘Because we are never going to die,’ said the Girl and Leo together, still more loudly.

‘Now sit you still here, darling wife,’ said Leo, ‘while I go to the Houses whom we hate, and learn how to make these men and women live as we do.’

‘And love as we do,’ said the Girl.

‘I do not think they need to be taught that,’ said Leo, and he strode away very angry, with his lion-skin swinging from his shoulder, till he came to the House where the Scorpion lives in the darkness, brandishing his tail over his back.

‘Why do you trouble the children of men?’ said Leo, with his heart between his teeth.

‘Are you so sure that I trouble the children of men alone?’ said the Scorpion. ‘Speak to your brother the Bull, and see what he says.’

‘I come on behalf of the children of men,’ said Leo. ‘I have learned to love as they do, and I wish them to live as I—as we do.’

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‘Your wish was granted long ago. Speak to the Bull. He is under my special care,’ said the Scorpion.

Leo dropped back to the earth again, and saw the great star Aldebaran, that is set in the forehead of the Bull, blazing very near to the earth. When he came up to it he saw that his brother the Bull, yoked to a countryman’s plough, was toiling through a wet rice-field with his head bent down, and the sweat streaming from his flanks. The countryman was urging him forward with a goad.

‘Gore that insolent to death,’ cried Leo, ‘and for the sake of our honour come out of the mire.’

‘I cannot,’ said the Bull, ‘the Scorpion has told me that some day, of which I cannot be sure, he will sting me where my neck is set on my shoulders, and that I shall die bellowing.’

‘What has that to do with this disgraceful work?’ said Leo, standing on the dyke that bounded the wet field.

‘Everything. This man could not plough without my help. He thinks that I am a stray beast.’

‘But he is a mud-crust ed cottar with matted hair,’ insisted Leo. ‘We are not meant for his use.’

‘You may not be. I am. I cannot tell when the Scorpion may choose to sting me to death—perhaps before I have turned this furrow.’ The Bull flung his bulk into the yoke, and the plough tore through the wet ground behind him, and the countryman goaded him till his flanks were red.

‘Do you like this?’ Leo called down the dripping furrows.

‘No,’ said the Bull over his shoulder as he lifted his hind legs from the clinging mud and cleared his nostrils.

Leo left him scornfully and passed to another country,

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where he found his brother the Ram in the centre of a crowd of country people who were hanging wreaths round his neck and feeding him on freshly-plucked green corn.

‘This is terrible,’ said Leo. ‘Break up that crowd and come away, my brother. Their hands are spoiling your fleece.’

‘I cannot,’ said the Ram. ‘The Archer told me that on some day of which I had no knowledge, he would send a dart through me, and that I should die in very great pain.’

‘What has that to do with this disgraceful show?’ said Leo, but he did not speak as confidently as before.

‘Everything in the world,’ said the Ram. ‘These people never saw a perfect sheep before. They think that I am a stray, and they will carry me from place to place as a model to all their flocks.’

‘But they are greasy shepherds; we are not intended to amuse them,’ said Leo.

‘You may not be, I am,’ said the Ram. ‘I cannot tell when the Archer may choose to send his arrow at me—perhaps before the people a mile down the road have seen me.’ The Ram lowered his head that a yokel newly arrived might throw a wreath of wild garlic-leaves over it, and waited patiently while the farmers tugged his fleece.

‘Do you like this?’ cried Leo over the shoulders of the crowd.

‘No,’ said the Ram, as the dust of the trampling feet made him sneeze, and he snuffed at the fodder piled before him.

Leo turned back intending to retrace his steps to the Houses, but as he was passing down a street he saw two

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small children, very dusty, rolling outside a cottage door, and playing with a cat. They were the Twins.

‘What are you doing here?’ said Leo, indignant.

‘Playing,’ said the Twins calmly.

‘Cannot you play on the banks of the Milky Way?’ said Leo.

‘We did,’ said they, ‘till the Fishes swam down and told us that some day they would come for us and not hurt us at all and carry us away. So now we are playing at being babies down here. The people like it.’

‘Do you like it?’ said Leo.

‘No,’ said the Twins, ‘but there are no cats in the Milky Way,’ and they pulled the cat’s tail thoughtfully. A woman came out of the doorway and stood behind them, and Leo saw in her face a look that he had sometimes seen in the Girl’s.

‘She thinks that we are foundlings,’ said the Twins, and they trotted indoors to the evening meal.

Then Leo hurried as swiftly as possible to all the Houses one after another; for he could not understand the new trouble that had come to his brethren. He spoke to the Archer, and the Archer assured him that so far as that House was concerned Leo had nothing to fear. The Waterman, the Fishes, and the Scorpion gave the same answer. They knew nothing of Leo, and cared less. They were the Houses, and they were busied in killing men.

At last he came to that very dark House where Cancer the Crab lies so still that you might think he was asleep if you did not see the ceaseless play and winnowing motion of the feathery branches round his mouth. That movement never ceases. It is like the eating of a smothered fire into rotten timber in that it is noiseless and without haste.

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Leo stood in front of the Crab, and the half darkness allowed him a glimpse of that vast blue-black back and the motionless eyes. Now and again he thought that he heard some one sobbing, but the noise was very faint.

‘Why do you trouble the children of men?’ said Leo. There was no answer, and against his will Leo cried, ‘Why do you trouble us? What have we done that you should trouble us?’

This time Cancer replied, ‘What do I know or care? You were born into my House, and at the appointed time I shall come for you.’

‘When is the appointed time?’ said Leo, stepping back from the restless movement of the mouth.

‘When the full moon fails to call the full tide,’ said the Crab, ‘I shall come for the one. When the other has taken the earth by the shoulders, I shall take that other by the throat.’

Leo lifted his hand to the apple of his throat, moistened his lips, and recovering himself, said:

‘Must I be afraid for two, then?’

‘For two,’ said the Crab, ‘and as many more as may come after.’

‘My brother, the Bull, had a better fate,’ said Leo, sullenly; ‘he is alone.’

A hand covered his mouth before he could finish the sentence, and he found the Girl in his arms. Woman-like, she had not stayed where Leo had left her, but had hastened off at once to know the worst, and passing all the other Houses, had come straight to Cancer.

‘That is foolish,’ said the Girl, whispering. ‘I have been waiting in the dark for long and long before you came. Then I was afraid. But now—’ She put her head down on his shoulder and sighed a sigh of contentment.

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‘I am afraid now,’ said Leo.

‘That is on my account,’ said the Girl. ‘I know it is, because I am afraid for your sake. Let us go, husband.’

They went out of the darkness together and came back to the Earth, Leo very silent, and the Girl striving to cheer him. ‘My brother’s fate is the better one,’ Leo would repeat from time to time, and at last he said: ‘Let us each go our own way and live alone till we die. We were born into the House of Cancer, and he will come for us.’

‘I know; I know. But where shall I go? And where will you sleep in the evening? But let us try. I will stay here. Do you go on?’

Leo took six steps forward very slowly, and three long steps backward very quickly, and the third step set him again at the Girl’s side. This time it was she who was begging him to go away and leave her, and he was forced to comfort her all through the night. That night decided them both never to leave each other for an instant, and when they had come to this decision they looked back at the darkness of the House of Cancer high above their heads, and with their arms round each other’s neck laughed, ‘Ha! ha! ha!’ exactly as the children of men laughed. And that was the first time in their lives that they had ever laughed.

Next morning they returned to their proper home, and saw the flowers and the sacrifices that had been laid before their doors by the villagers of the hills. Leo stamped down the fire with his heel, and the Girl flung the flower-wreaths out of sight, shuddering as she did so. When the villagers returned, as of custom, to see what had become of their offerings, they found neither roses nor burned flesh on the altars, but only a man and a wo-

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man, with frightened white faces, sitting hand in hand on the altar-steps.

‘Are you not Virgo?’ said a woman to the Girl. ‘I sent you flowers yesterday.’

‘Little sister,’ said the Girl, flushing to her forehead, ‘do not send any more flowers, for I am only a woman like yourself.’ The man and the woman went away doubtfully.

‘Now, what shall we do?’ said Leo.

‘We must try to be cheerful, I think,’ said the Girl. ‘We know the very worst that can happen to us, but we do not know the best that love can bring us. We have a great deal to be glad of.’

‘The certainty of death,’ said Leo.

‘All the children of men have that certainty also; yet they laughed long before we ever knew how to laugh. We must learn to laugh, Leo. We have laughed once already.’

People who consider themselves Gods, as the Children of the Zodiac did, find it hard to laugh, because the Immortals know nothing worth laughter or tears. Leo rose up with a very heavy heart, and he and the Girl together went to and fro among men; their new fear of death behind them. First they laughed at a naked baby attempting to thrust its fat toes into its foolish pink mouth; next they laughed at a kitten chasing her own tail; and then they laughed at a boy trying to steal a kiss from a girl, and getting his ears boxed. Lastly, they laughed because the wind blew in their faces as they ran down a hill-side together, and broke panting and breathless into a knot of villagers at the bottom. The villagers laughed too at their flying clothes and wind-reddened faces; and in the evening gave them food and invited

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them to a dance on the grass, where everybody laughed through the mere joy of being able to dance.

That night Leo jumped up from the Girl's side crying: 'Every one of those people we met just now will die—'

'So shall we,' said the Girl sleepily. 'Lie down again, dear.' Leo could not see that her face was wet with tears.

But Leo was up and far across the fields, driven forward by the fear of death for himself and for the Girl, who was dearer to him than himself. Presently he came across the Bull drowsing in the moonlight after a hard day's work, and looking through half-shut eyes at the beautiful straight furrows that he had made.

'Ho!' said the Bull, 'so you have been told these things too. Which of the Houses holds your death?'

Leo pointed upwards to the dark House of the Crab and groaned. 'And he will come for the Girl too,' he said.

'Well,' said the Bull, 'what will you do?'

Leo sat down on the dyke and said that he did not know.

'You cannot pull a plough,' said the Bull, with a little touch of contempt. 'I can, and that prevents me from thinking of the Scorpion.'

Leo was angry and said nothing till the dawn broke, and the cultivator came to yoke the Bull to his work.

'Sing,' said the Bull, as the stiff muddy ox-bow creaked and strained. 'My shoulder is galled. Sing one of the songs that we sang when we thought we were all Gods together.'

Leo stepped back into the cane-brake and lifted up his voice in a song of the Children of the Zodiac—the war-whoop of the young Gods who are afraid of nothing. At first he dragged the song along unwillingly, and then the song dragged him, and his voice rolled across the fields, and the Bull stepped to the tune, and the cultiva-

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tor banged his flanks out of sheer light-heartedness, and the furrows rolled away behind the plough more and more swiftly. Then the Girl came across the fields looking for Leo and found him singing in the cane. She joined her voice to his, and the cultivator's wife brought her spinning into the open and listened with all her children round her. When it was time for the nooning, Leo and the Girl had sung themselves both thirsty and hungry, but the cultivator and his wife gave them rye-bread and milk and many thanks, and the Bull found occasion to say: 'You have helped me to do a full half-field more than I should have done. But the hardest part of the day is to come, brother.'

Leo wished to lie down and brood over the words of the Crab. The Girl went away to talk to the cultivator's wife and baby, and the afternoon ploughing began.

'Help us now,' said the Bull. 'The tides of the day are running down. My legs are very stiff. Sing if you never sang before.'

'To a mud-spattered villager?' said Leo.

'He is under the same doom as ourselves. Are you a coward?' said the Bull. Leo flushed and began again with a sore throat and a bad temper. Little by little he dropped away from the songs of the Children and made up a song as he went along; and this was a thing he could never have done had he not met the Crab face to face. He remembered facts concerning cultivators, and bullocks, and rice-fields, that he had not particularly noticed before the interview, and he strung them all together, growing more interested as he sang, and he told the cultivator much more about himself and his work than the cultivator knew. The Bull grunted approval as he toiled down the furrows for the last time that day, and the song

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ended, leaving the cultivator with a very good opinion of himself in his aching bones. The Girl came out of the hut where she had been keeping the children quiet, and talking woman-talk to the wife, and they all ate the evening meal together.

‘Now yours must be a very pleasant life,’ said the cultivator, ‘sitting as you do on a dyke all day and singing just what comes into your head. Have you been at it long, you two—gipsies?’

‘Ah!’ lowed the Bull from his byre. ‘That’s all the thanks you will ever get from men, brother.’

‘No. We have only just begun it,’ said the Girl; ‘but we are going to keep to it as long as we live. Are we not, Leo?’

‘Yes,’ said he, and they went away hand-in-hand.

‘You can sing beautifully, Leo,’ said she, as a wife will to her husband.

‘What were you doing?’ said he.

‘I was talking to the mother and the babies,’ she said. ‘You would not understand the little things that make us women laugh.’

‘And—and I am to go on with this—this gipsy-work?’ said Leo.

‘Yes, dear, and I will help you.’

There is no written record of the life of Leo and of the Girl, so we cannot tell how Leo took to his new employment which he detested. We are only sure that the Girl loved him when and wherever he sang; even when, after the song was done, she went round with the equivalent of a tambourine, and collected the pence for the daily bread. There were times too when it was Leo’s very hard task to console the Girl for the indignity of horrible praise that people gave him and her—for the silly wag-

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ging peacock feathers that they stuck in his cap, and the buttons and pieces of cloth that they sewed on his coat. Woman-like, she could advise and help to the end, but the meanness of the means revolted.

‘What does it matter,’ Leo would say, ‘so long as the songs make them a little happier?’ And they would go down the road and begin again on the old, old refrain: that whatever came or did not come the children of men must not be afraid. It was heavy teaching at first, but in process of years Leo discovered that he could make men laugh and hold them listening to him even when the rain fell. Yet there were people who would sit down and cry softly, though the crowd was yelling with delight, and there were people who maintained that Leo made them do this; and the Girl would talk to them in the pauses of the performance and do her best to comfort them. People would die too, while Leo was talking and singing, and laughing, for the Archer, and the Scorpion, and the Crab, and the other Houses were as busy as ever. Sometimes the crowd broke, and were frightened, and Leo strove to keep them steady by telling them that this was cowardly; and sometimes they mocked at the Houses that were killing them, and Leo explained that this was even more cowardly than running away.

In their wanderings they came across the Bull, or the Ram, or the Twins, but all were too busy to do more than nod to each other across the crowd, and go on with their work. As the years rolled on even that recognition ceased, for the Children of the Zodiac had forgotten that they had ever been Gods working for the sake of men. The star Aldebaran was crusted with caked dirt on the Bull’s forehead, the Ram’s fleece was dusty and torn, and the Twins were only babies fighting over the

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cat on the doorstep. It was then that Leo said: 'Let us stop singing and making jokes.' And it was then that the Girl said: 'No—' but she did not know why she said 'No' so energetically. Leo maintained that it was perversity, till she herself, at the end of a dusty day, made the same suggestion to him, and he said 'most certainly not,' and they quarrelled miserably between the hedge-rows, forgetting the meaning of the stars above them. Other singers and other talkers sprang up in the course of the years, and Leo, forgetting that there could never be too many of these, hated them for dividing the applause of the children of men, which he thought should be all his own. The Girl would grow angry too, and then the songs would be broken, and the jests fall flat for weeks to come, and the children of men would shout: 'Go home, you two gipsies. Go home and learn something worth singing!'

After one of these sorrowful shameful days, the Girl, walking by Leo's side through the fields, saw the full moon coming up over the trees, and she clutched Leo's arm, crying: 'The time has come now. Oh, Leo, forgive me!'

'What is it?' said Leo. He was thinking of the other singers.

'My husband!' she answered, and she laid his hand upon her breast, and the breast that he knew so well was hard as stone. Leo groaned, remembering what the Crab had said.

'Surely we were Gods once,' he cried.

'Surely we are Gods still,' said the Girl. 'Do you not remember when you and I went to the house of the Crab and—were not very much afraid? And since then
. . . we have forgotten what we were singing for

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—we sang for the pence, and, oh, we fought for them!—
We, who are the Children of the Zodiac.'

'It was my fault,' said Leo.

'How can there be any fault of yours that is not mine too?' said the Girl. 'My time has come, but you will live longer, and . . .' The look in her eyes said all she could not say.

'Yes, I will remember that we are Gods,' said Leo.

It is very hard, even for a child of the Zodiac, who has forgotten his Godhead, to see his wife dying slowly and to know that he cannot help her. The Girl told Leo in those last months of all that she had said and done among the wives and the babies at the back of the roadside performances, and Leo was astonished that he knew so little of her who had been so much to him. When she was dying she told him never to fight for pence or quarrel with the other singers; and, above all, to go on with his singing immediately after she was dead.

Then she died, and after he had buried her he went down the road to a village that he knew, and the people hoped that he would begin quarrelling with a new singer that had sprung up while he had been away. But Leo called him 'my brother.' The new singer was newly married—and Leo knew it—and when he had finished singing, Leo straightened himself and sang the 'Song of the Girl,' which he had made coming down the road. Every man who was married or hoped to be married, whatever his rank or colour, understood that song—even the bride leaning on the new husband's arm understood it too—and presently when the song ended, and Leo's heart was bursting in him, the men sobbed. 'That was a sad tale,' they said at last, 'now make us laugh.' Because Leo had known all the sorrow that a man could

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know, including the full knowledge of his own fall who had once been a God—he, changing his song quickly, made the people laugh till they could laugh no more. They went away feeling ready for any trouble in reason, and they gave Leo more peacock feathers and pence than he could count. Knowing that pence led to quarrels and that peacock feathers were hateful to the Girl, he put them aside and went away to look for his brothers, to remind them that they too were Gods.

He found the Bull goring the undergrowth in a ditch, for the Scorpion had stung him, and he was dying, not slowly, as the Girl had died, but quickly.

‘I know all,’ the Bull groaned, as Leo came up. ‘I had forgotten too, but I remember now. Go and look at the fields I ploughed. The furrows are straight. I forgot that I was a God, but I drew the plough perfectly straight, for all that. And you, brother?’

‘I am not at the end of the ploughing,’ said Leo. ‘Does Death hurt?’

‘No, but dying does,’ said the Bull, and he died. The cultivator who then owned him was much annoyed, for there was a field still unploughed.

It was after this that Leo made the Song of the Bull who had been a God and forgotten the fact, and he sang it in such a manner that half the young men in the world conceived that they too might be Gods without knowing it. A half of that half grew impossibly conceited and died early. A half of the remainder strove to be Gods and failed, but the other half accomplished four times more work than they would have done under any other delusion.

Later, years later, always wandering up and down and making the children of men laugh, he found the

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Twins sitting on the bank of a stream waiting for the Fishes to come and carry them away. They were not in the least afraid, and they told Leo that the woman of the House had a real baby of her own, and that when that baby grew old enough to be mischievous he would find a well-educated cat waiting to have its tail pulled. Then the Fishes came for them, but all that the people saw was two children drowned in a brook; and though their foster-mother was very sorry, she hugged her own real baby to her breast and was grateful that it was only the foundlings.

Then Leo made the Song of the Twins, who had forgotten that they were Gods and had played in the dust to amuse a foster-mother. That song was sung far and wide among the women. It caused them to laugh and cry and hug their babies closer to their hearts all in one breath; and some of the women who remembered the Girl said: 'Surely that is the voice of Virgo. Only she could know so much about ourselves.'

After those three songs were made, Leo sang them over and over again till he was in danger of looking upon them as so many mere words, and the people who listened grew tired, and there came back to Leo the old temptation to stop singing once and for all. But he remembered the Girl's dying words and persisted.

One of his listeners interrupted him as he was singing. 'Leo,' said he, 'I have heard you telling us not to be afraid for the past forty years. Can you not sing something new now?'

'No,' said Leo, 'it is the only song that I am allowed to sing. You must not be afraid of the Houses, even when they kill you.' The man turned to go, wearily, but there came a whistling through the air, and the ar-

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row of the Archer was seen skimming low above the earth, pointing to the man's heart. He drew himself up, and stood still waiting till the arrow struck home.

'I die,' he said quietly. 'It is well for me, Leo, that you sang for forty years.'

'Are you afraid?' said Leo, bending over him.

'I am a man, not a God,' said the man. 'I should have run away but for your songs. My work is done, and I die without making a show of my fear.'

'I am very well paid,' said Leo to himself. 'Now that I see what my songs are doing, I will sing better ones.'

He went down the road, collected his little knot of listeners, and began the Song of the Girl. In the middle of his singing he felt the cold touch of the Crab's claw on the apple of his throat. He lifted his hand, choked, and stopped for an instant.

'Sing on, Leo,' said the crowd. 'The old song runs as well as ever it did.'

Leo went on steadily till the end with the cold fear at his heart. When his song was ended, he felt the grip on his throat tighten. He was old, he had lost the Girl, he knew that he was losing more than half his power to sing, he could scarcely walk to the diminishing crowds that waited for him, and could not see their faces when they stood about him. None the less, he cried angrily to the Crab:

'Why have you come for me now?'

'You were born under my care. How can I help coming for you?' said the Crab wearily. Every human being whom the Crab killed had asked that same question.

'But I was just beginning to know what my songs were doing,' said Leo.

'Perhaps that is why,' said the Crab, and the grip tightened.

MANY INVENTIONS

‘You said you would not come till I had taken the world by the shoulders,’ gasped Leo, falling back.

‘I always keep my word. You have done that three times with three songs. What more do you desire?’

‘Let me live to see the world know it,’ pleaded Leo. ‘Let me be sure that my songs—’

‘Make men brave?’ said the Crab. ‘Even then there would be one man who was afraid. The Girl was braver than you are. Come.’

Leo was standing close to the restless, insatiable mouth.

‘I forgot,’ said he simply. ‘The Girl was braver. But I am a God too, and I am not afraid.’

‘What is that to me?’ said the Crab.

Then Leo’s speech was taken from him and he lay still and dumb, watching Death till he died.

Leo was the last of the Children of the Zodiac. After his death there sprang up a breed of little mean men, whimpering and flinching and howling because the Houses killed them and theirs, who wished to live for ever without any pain. They did not increase their lives, but they increased their own torments miserably, and there were no Children of the Zodiac to guide them; and the greater part of Leo’s songs were lost.

Only he had carved on the Girl’s tombstone the last verse of the Song of the Girl, which stands at the head of this story.

One of the children of men, coming thousands of years later, rubbed away the lichen, read the lines, and applied them to a trouble other than the one Leo meant. Being a man, men believed that he had made the verses himself; but they belong to Leo, the Child of the Zodiac, and teach, as he taught, that whatever comes or does not come we men must not be afraid.

ENVOY

HEH! Walk her round. Heave, ah heave her
short again!
Over, snatch her over, there, and hold her on
the pawl.

Loose all sail, and brace your yards aback and full—
Ready jib to pay her off and heave short all!

Well, ah fare you well! We can stay no more with
you, my love—

Down, set down your liquor and your girl from
off your knee;

For the wind has come to say:

‘You must take me while you may,

If you’d go to Mother Carey where she feeds her
chicks at sea!’

Heh! Walk her round. Break, ah break it out o’ that!

Break our starboard bower out, apeak, awash, aclear!
Port—port she casts, with the harbour-mud beneath her
foot,

And that’s the last o’ bottom we shall see this year!

MANY INVENTIONS

Well, ah fare you well, for we've got to take her out again—

Take her out in ballast, riding light and cargo-free.

And it's time to clear and quit

When the hawser grips the bitt,

So we'll pay you with the foresheet and a promise from the sea!

Heh! Tally on. Aft and walk away with her!

Handsome to the cathead, now; O tally on the fall!

Stop, seize and fish, and easy on the davit-guy.

Up, well up the fluke of her, and inboard haul!

Well, ah fare you well, for the Channel wind's took hold of us,

Choking down our voices as we snatch the gaskets free.

And it's blowing up for night,

And she's dropping Light on Light,

And she's snorting and she's snatching for a breath of open sea.

Wheel, full and by; but she'll smell her road alone to-night.

Sick she is and harbour-sick—O sick to clear the land!

Roll down to Brest with the old Red Ensign over us—

Carry on and thrash her out with all she'll stand!

Well, ah fare you well, and it's Ushant gives the door to us,

Whirling like a windmill on the dirty scud to lee:

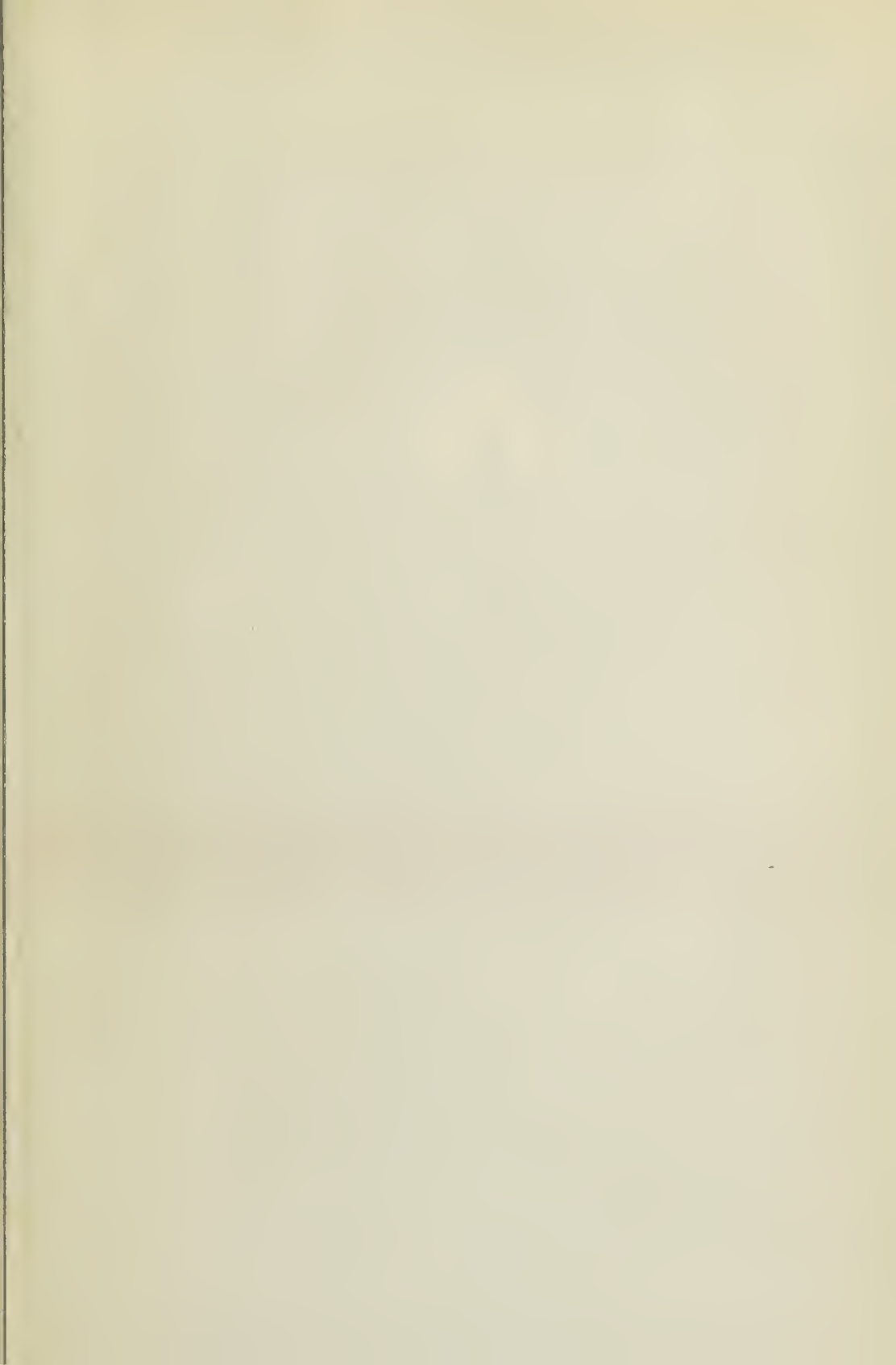
Till the last, last flicker goes

ENVOY

From the tumbling water-rows,
And we're off to Mother Carey
(Walk her down to Mother Carey!)
Oh, we're bound for Mother Carey where she
feeds her chicks at sea!

THE END





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